

THRILLING WONDER STORIES

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JUNE

A THRILLING
PUBLICATION



**THROUGH
THE
BLACKBOARD**

*A Novel of
Strange Adventure
By JOEL
TOWNSLEY ROGERS*

**WOBBLES
IN THE MOON**

*A John Carstairs Mystery
By FRANK R. MCGEE*

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FOR VICTORY!

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1 "The night sky was filled with enemy planes, and the earth shook with explosions. At the height of the raid we learned a bomb had smashed a gas main near the works. Rourke and I volunteered for the fixing job..."



2 "We found it," continued Rourke. "A big delayed action bomb sitting on a severed pipe in the middle of a three-foot crater. We set to work. Letts held the flashlight, taking care to shield it so the Nazis couldn't see it, while I blocked the broken pipe with clay."



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SCIENTIFICTION'S LEADING MAGAZINE

THRILLING

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STORIES



The Magazine of Prophetic Fiction

Vol. XXIV, No. 2

June, 1943

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A Complete Novel

By

ROSS ROCKLYNNE

THE LOTOS EATERS

An Astounding Novellet

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BOLLING BRANHAM

TUBBY—ATOM SMASHER

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By JOEL TOWNSLEY ROGERS

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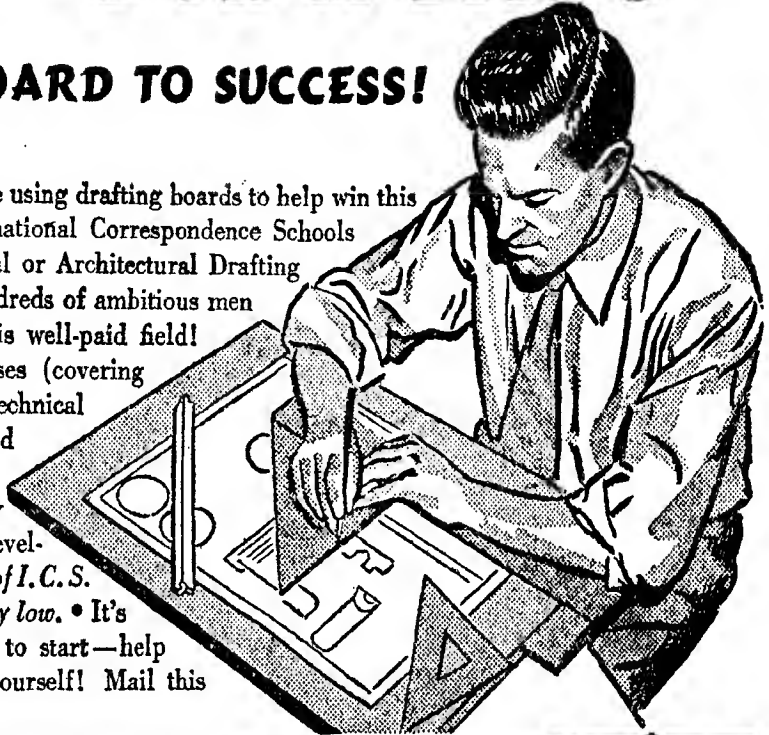
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I'M "trading-in" old bodies for new! I'm taking men who know that the condition of their arms, shoulders, chests and legs—their strength, "wind," and endurance—is not 100%. And I'm making NEW MEN of them.

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Where the Editors, Readers and Science Fiction Club Members Meet

ARE you ready to march forward in step with the times? Now, if ever there was a day, is when **SCIENCE FICTION LEAGUERS** should be in the van—pointing the way to the better, brighter tomorrow which lurks beyond the clouds of war.

The great plants opened by our fighting democracy will in the era of our victory be available for the production of machinery, new metals, plastics and hundreds of things which would have remained fallow if not developed under the stress of our times. There will be machine tools—machines which make machines—in abundance.

There will be an immense increase in cheap electrical power. There will be a vast amount of postponed needs and wants to be filled. There will be a crying demand for the fruits of all our looms—and there will be thousands of workers and mechanics trained in the demanding school of war ready and anxious to demonstrate their abilities in brand-new peacetime pursuits. Above all, there will be a renaissance of science and invention coupled with a spiritual renaissance such as the world has never seen.

The future holds greater promise than it has for a thousand years. Man is on the threshold of a new day and age. He is really going to go places!

Prize Contest

BECAUSE of the boundless opportunities which are opening ahead of us all, including the Herculean task of setting the world aright politically and geographically, we have decided to hold open the contest announced last issue.

For the best ideas suggested by individual readers for the improved and increased functioning of **SCIENCE FICTION LEAGUES** henceforth **THRILLING WONDER STORIES** will award three prizes for the three best letters of 300 words each. The prizes are original drawings by Finlay, Schomberg and Marchioni. For the best letter from an established and functioning chapter of the league (not from an individual) **THRILLING WONDER STORIES** will present an original cover oil painting by Bergey or Belarski.

This contest thus remains open until the first of May, 1943. Those of you who have not yet thought up an idea and submitted it, do so at once. There is still time to win a treasured prize. The winning letters will be printed in this department. Hurry, while there is yet time!

We cannot enter into correspondence on

this contest, and decisions of the contest editor will be final. Letters postmarked after midnight of May 1, 1943, will not be eligible. In the event of a tie, duplicate prizes will be awarded. All entries will become the property of **THRILLING WONDER STORIES**.

Address your prize suggestions to The Letter Contest Editor, **SCIENCE FICTION LEAGUE, THRILLING WONDER STORIES**, 10 East 40th Street, New York, N. Y. While the contest editor is busy mulling over the entries thus far received, let us hear from the rest of you readers.

Stories to Come

LOOKING forward to our next issue, there are three stories ahead that I want briefly to tell you about. The first is, of course, the featured novel—**EXILE TO CENTAURI**, by Ross Rocklynne. Those of you who like the pattern of putting the hero in an incongruous situation and then letting him work his way out will thoroughly enjoy this story. Rocklynne has successfully applied this plan to science fiction.

The hero, Barney Barringer, is a thorough hypochondriac as well as an inventor. And circumstances beyond his control place him in an impossible role on a planet of Centauri. How he gets there, what he does, and how he gets back makes **EXILE TO CENTAURI** one of the best scientific stories of the year. And to top it off, this story will be illustrated by Virgil Finlay.

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And you have already noted, I do not doubt, that an Amateur Prize Contest story is included in this present issue—**TWO-TIMING MAN**, by Thaedra Alden. Particularly glad is your editor to print this story, because the author is a woman, and women are gradually becoming enthusiastic readers and thinkers in the scientific field.

Next issue we bring you another of these prize-winning "first" stories. **THE AMNESIAC**, by George E. Herman, is a precious

(Concluded on page 10)

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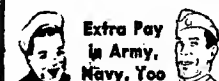
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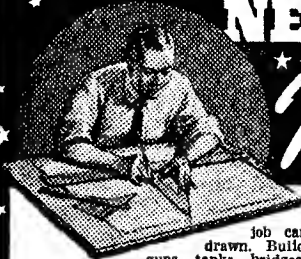
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LOOKING FORWARD

(Concluded from page 8)

little yarn about a man who lost his memory. By no means is this the usual trite story of a person who can't remember. Instead, it is just about the best attempt to describe what goes on inside the mind of a split-personality that we have ever seen. And don't worry about the scientification angle; it is there.

Amateur Story Contest

Which brings us logically to the matter of our popular **AMATEUR STORY CONTEST**. For the period ending March 1, 1943, we are pleased to make the following announcement of winners and those receiving honorable mention:

WINNER

James Henry Carlisle III, Spartanburg, S.C.,
for THE BUBBLE PEOPLE.

HONORABLE MENTION

Charles Fritch, Utica, New York.

Lawrence W. Hall, Douglas, Wyoming.

Victor Maysper, Jr., Manlius, N. Y.

R. Jon Gruebner, Chicago, Ill.

Raymond Washington, Jr., Live Oak, Fla.

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Address your manuscript to the Amateur Story Contest Editor, **THRILLING WONDER STORIES**, 10 East 40th Street, New York, N. Y. The prize is payment for winners at our regular rates. And, believe me, I'd like to publish a winning list every issue!

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—THE EDITOR.

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Professor Gouf inserted the match in the sole of Billy Camorra's shoe

THROUGH THE BLACKBOARD

By JOEL TOWNSLEY ROGERS

Unexpectedly Tossed into the Fourth Dimension, Little Mathematics Professor Noel Gouf Has an Amazing Chance to Solve All of His Personal Problems While Time Stands Motionless!

CHAPTER I

The Beautiful World of Math

IT WAS Professor Noel Gouf's final class in Senior Math at the Stratton, New Jersey, High School. He stood at the blackboard with a piece of chalk in his hand, a little bug-eyed man of forty-five with a big bulb of head growing out on the stem of his thin neck

like an overripe spring onion, to give his talk on the fourth dimension.

For twenty-nine years he had always concluded the course in Senior Math with the same little discourse. It had become a tradition, with generations of graduating seniors at Stratton High, like the Senior Woggle. Old Prof Gouf and his lecture on the fourth dimension.

Today, however, he was giving it for the last time, although none of them

A SHORT NOVEL OF STRANGE ADVENTURE

knew it. There would be no more classes in Senior Math for him at Stratton High, nor any place else, he was afraid. Principal MacGlurk and the Board of Education had not renewed his contract. And since middle-aged, ineffectual high school mathematics teachers are far more plentiful than jobs, little Noel Gouf knew that he was finished.

"Ladies and gentlemen—" he said apologetically, clearing his throat.

Outside the open windows the warm, bright June afternoon dozed and hummed. Inside the classroom thirty-seven seniors of assorted sizes and shapes of both sexes settled down to their individual pursuits.

Muriel Morton had already laid her lovely head against her curled fist, and was off day-dreaming. Billy Camorra, twenty years old and six-feet-three, draped a lanky leg with garterless sock over his other knee, and began to fabricate a cardboard spitball, fishing around in his pockets for a rubber band.

Blond Niles Gowambly, the football captain, with the blitz haircut, turned sideward to resume the endless game of tick-tat-toe which he had been playing all year with Gloria Glick, the president of the student council. "Leaping Leander" Leverwaite, the hurdling track star, arose and stretched himself, in preparation to crossing the class room to shake dice with "Four-Eyes" Ryan.

A buzz of conversation filled the air, like the buzz of bees, hornets, flies, gnats and Japanese beetles out the windows.

"Ladies and gentlemen—" said little Noel Gouf, beaming with his ineffectual smile.

NO ONE paid any attention to him. No one ever paid any attention to old Prof Gouf. No one ever understood anything about the formulas which he wrote down and the endless computations he made, and the diagrams he drew. It was the universal opinion of the student body that he didn't understand anything about them himself.

Still he was a well-meaning and harmless old screwball. Give him a black-

board and a piece of chalk, and he could amuse himself happily for hours, standing at it and muttering to himself. Like a child whose fingers have been smeared with molasses and which is given a feather to pick back and forth from one hand to the other, to its endless entertainment. It accomplishes nothing, but it does no harm.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said little Professor Gouf, "on this last day of our happy little class, which I trust has been both stimulating and instructive to all of you, I am going to dispense with the ordinary textbook problems, and instead am going to discourse briefly on a theoretical world of four dimensions, as has been my custom for many years—"

For many years, he thought. And now the end of it. Suddenly he wanted to burst into tears. To be a boy again, and lay his head on the lap of his mother, and weep his heart out. But a man can't cry.

Mathematics. Abstruse theories. The lovely perfect world of intangible and unreal speculation.

He had been a boy once, a big-domed boy. He had been an infant prodigy, the delight of his teachers, the pride and awe of his heavy-shouldered, tired, plodding, slow-speaking laborer father; the hope and glory of his shining-eyed young mother. He had graduated from this very high school at eleven. He had graduated from Harvard *summa cum laude* at fourteen.

Noel Gouf. The mathematical wizard. Written up in newspapers and magazines. Lecturing to the Graduate School faculty on "The Theory of the Fourth Dimension" at fifteen.

What a lovely world, the perfect world of mathematics. Minus quantities. Multiply x to the n th power. Carry onward to infinity. Everything working out to perfection with a pencil and a piece of paper, or a blackboard and some chalk.

All that in his big dome. But what of it? The pure and beautiful world of mathematics is not the world in which a man must live, or can. "Butch" Sunder-sohn had been in his high school class thirty-three years ago, and had flunked



"Butch! Listen to me. This is Brains Gouf, Butch! I'm here in the fourth dimension"

out of elementary algebra after repeating it three times. He was the multi-millionaire head of Sundersohn Industries now, with a half a billion dollars in war contracts.

"Skiddy" Merton, the class playboy at Harvard, into whose amiable bubble-blown brain little Noel Gouf had diligently tried to cram sufficient tutorial information to get him through freshman trig, was head of his own great brokerage house. He was director of thirty or more great corporations with assets of twenty billion dollars, even though he still didn't know what a cosine was.

And Noel Gouf, the infant prodigy, the Phi Beta Kappa marshal, the *summa cum*, was a professor in Stratton High at twenty-seven hundred dollars a year, giving the same discourse to a class of indifferent high school half-wits that he had given to the attentive Graduate School faculty when he had been fifteen, thirty years ago. And now he had lost even this poor job.

IN THAT pure world of mathematics in which he had lived and dreamed, the world had passed him by. It had never had much use for him, a theoretical and impractical dreamer, at the best. Now it had none at all. It would have been better for him if he had never been born, with his big head, into this hard and tough and all-too imperfect world of practicality.

Perhaps if he had been able to finish his graduate work and get his Ph.D., he might have obtained some berth on a university faculty where he could have continued his speculative mathematics. Old Hoogstretter, the mathematics head, had dryly suggested that sometime, in another thirty years, young Gouf might have his place. He might have become another and greater Einstein by this time.

Still, there are only a limited number of even Einsteins for whom universities can find room on their faculties. Universities are practical businesses, run by practical men, and such men have to

think of hard, realistic matters like endowments and shrinking per cents on invested capital, and the necessity of having a well-rounded faculty, and the importance of being useful and constructive in their teaching.

A man needs only one necktie and one handkerchief in his breast pocket, and is not any better dressed if he wears a dozen. So a university needs only one phenomenal abstract mathematician, only one outstanding Sanskrit scholar, one Grade A atom-smasher, one supreme authority on the life and habits of the female titmouse, and one of other kinds of decorative but not indispensable scholars, to appear sufficiently resplendent and well-dressed. Doubling the number or multiplying them by a hundred is superfluous.

Noel Gouf had not gone on to earn his Ph.D. anyway. One June day like this, when he had been sixteen years old and finishing his second year in Graduate School, his quiet, tired, plodding, slow-speaking father had collapsed at his laborer's job, digging a sewer beneath the boiling sun.

He had died in half an hour of the heart disease which he had kept silent about so long.

Noel Gouf had had his bright-eyed, worshipful little mother to take care of, with the illness which had rendered her helpless, and with the years she had to live not many. So he had left the Graduate School, and had taken the mathematics teaching job here at Stratton High temporarily.

Four years afterward there had been Jessica Corlay, his brightest and loveliest pupil, and though she had understood nothing about mathematics, she had worshiped him. So he had found himself married, in the year his mother had died. And then there had been little Tommy, and in a few years more little Caroline followed.

Algebra, plane geometry, solid geometry, and elementary trig. He had been professor of mathematics at Stratton for twenty-nine years. And now it was ended.

CHAPTER II

Two Speeches—Spoken and Unspoken

PROFESSOR GOUF stood there at the blackboard with the chalk dust on his old gray flannel suit, the dust of twenty years. With his big dome of head and his big scared eyes. With his wistful pathetic smile, and terrified of life.

A little man, not above five feet five, and getting older every year. He who had once been an infant prodigy, the brightest boy in all the school, the joy of his teachers, the pride of his father, the hope and glory of his mother. With all the world before him, it had seemed.

He would like to say to the giggling, slumbering, playing, inattentive class before him:

"Ladies and gentlemen, I know that I am a joke, and that my life has been a hideous failure. My boy Tom began to despise me as an impractical fool when he was no more than ten years old. When he finished high school he got himself a job working with his hands, as a mechanic. He said that his grandfather had been a laborer, and had been more useful than anything I had ever been. He is now a flying instructor in the air service, and with his flying pay earns more than I do.

"My daughter Caroline is a secretary in a judge's office, and earns almost as much. She, too, despises me. She is engaged to an illiterate but highly successful labor politician whom I think is a crook, instead of the young English professor that I wanted her to marry. She only laughs at me when I say the man's no good.

"My wife, who knows me best of the whole world, long ago came to the realization that I am a man with no more common sense than a six-year-old child, and must be scolded and petted and treated accordingly. I have no pals and buddies among men. They all know that I am a freak, and avoid me. Even you pimple-faced young rug-cutters and jive-

brained morons regard me as a complete idiot. And you are right. You are perfectly right.

"I am a failure, a dolt, a clown, and an idiot. Old 'Jawbone' MacGlurk is going to fire me because I can't keep order among you. When I lose this job I'll never be able to find another. I can't even get a defense job. The Army would laugh at me if I tried to volunteer.

"Last week, in a mood of desperation, I mortgaged my house for everything it would carry, and borrowed to the hilt on my furniture and my old car and the three-thousand-dollar life insurance policy I carry, and put the money into Wall Street, to see if I could make five thousand into fifty, with all the mathematics that I know. I put it in the brokerage house of a college classmate of mine who couldn't pass elementary trig, and flunked out of about everything else, and who is now worth fifty million dollars.

"Already, in five days, I have lost a thousand dollars of the little stake I had put in. Just this morning I ordered my brokers to buy two hundred shares of Sundersohn Industries cumulative preferred at seventy-eight dollars on margin, in a desperate effort to recoup. That was more than I had margin for, and I had to send them a check by special delivery for twenty-five hundred dollars which I do not have in the bank.

"The stock has been rising steadily for the past three weeks. It is a sure thing that within the next few days the company will declare at least a thirty-dollar dividend on account of deferred payments, and the stock will rise at least ten points more. In which case, if I can only hold on, I will make two thousand dollars. And sell and take my profits and get the money in the bank before that check I sent them has gone through.

"But if the declaration of the dividend is delayed a few days, the stock may hesitate, and I may have to sell at a loss. And if by any chance it should drop too much, before I can sell out, my four thousand dollars will be wiped out, and I will have nothing to cover the check I have sent them, and I will go to jail.

"I am Noel Gouf, and I was an infant prodigy once, and I have a big bulging brain. And I am of no more use than if I were an idiot drooling in a darkroom. I can't even feed myself. I don't know enough to come in out of the rain.

"Thirty years ago, when I was younger than the youngest of you, I was lecturing to the Graduate School faculty on the fourth dimension, and old Hoogstretter told me that I would make discoveries which would shake the mathematical world before I was done. And here I am. You are quite right, young ladies and gentlemen. I am just a perfectly futile fool, and a joke and a clown."

BUT they were not paying any attention to him, and they wouldn't even if he talked like that. Nothing he could do or say would surprise them or even interest them. He was just an idiot, old Prof. Gouf.

"Ladies and gentlemen," was what he did say, "let us consider briefly the possibility of the existence of another, or fourth dimension. In other words, the possibility that instead of this being a world in which everything is measurable only in three dimensions, namely, width, length, and height, there may be actually one or more additional dimensions to reality which we fail to perceive because of some human intellectual limitation. And let us try to picture by diagram, if possible, what such a world would be like.

"The simplest approach is to imagine a two-dimensional world, and what it would look like to our three-dimensional eyes. To two-dimensional people, in such a two-dimensional world, a line, such as this line AB—" he drew a line upon the blackboard, labeling the ends of it A and B—"would be the equivalent of a blind and impassable wall. Something over which no one could climb, and through which no one could look. As solid and impenetrable as the brick wall behind this blackboard in front of me. Yet with our three-dimensional perception we can see on both sides of this line AB at once, of course, and we

would find no difficulty at all in traversing it.

"Here is a two-dimensional room, ABCD—"he drew three more lines on the blackboard, making a square on the line which he had previously drawn, and labeling its additional corners C and D—"in which the two-dimensional inhabitants would feel themselves as shut off as we feel ourselves in any three-dimensional room. Pulling down the shades, they might undress and go happily to bed, quite unaware that three-dimensional people could see into their shut-in room as easily as if the walls did not exist.

"So in all the acts of their lives, because they could perceive only two dimensions, they would have a feeling of impenetrability which would be ludicrous to us with our three-dimensional perception.

"Let us try to picture a four-dimensional world, and what this three-dimensional world, as we see it, would look like to people who have the perception of such a fourth dimension. To anyone with such a perception we would be as exposed inside a closed three-dimensional room, like this classroom, as our two-dimensional people would be to us inside this square.

"A person with the fourth-dimensional perception could see and reach through what seems solid and impenetrable to us. Could step over or through or between these walls in the same way that we can step over the lines of a two-dimensional square.

"Is there such an additional dimension to reality, and do some men have perception of it? There have been magicians such as the famous Houdini, who performed feats explicable by no known laws of the three-dimensional world. Such as getting out of locked steel boxes, with his limbs shackled, beneath the sea.

"Houdini always claimed that there was nothing supernatural in his exploits—but he never explained how he did them. A fourth dimension would not be supernatural, of course, if it exists.

He and other famous magicians may quite possibly have happened to discover it, but decided to use it for their own professional purposes and profit rather than making it known to science.

"Let us try to diagram such a four-dimensional world. Let us take this square ABCD, and extend it into this solid ABCDEFGH"—he drew legs from the four corners of the square, joining them at the top by another series of lines, like a glass box seen in perspective—and see if we can picture—"

HE HAD done the same thing for thirty years. The same words, the same diagrams, the same little formulae. But he felt a fever mounting in him this afternoon, an eerie feeling. Outside the windows the murmuring of the fat June-laden insects was a soporific song. He felt the bones inside him rush and melt. An intangible trembling had taken hold of him.

At their desks the thirty-seven pupils went about their business. Billy Camorra, tossing back his raven hair that had fallen over his forehead had made his cardboard missile, hard and stinging, shaped like a boomerang. He had found a rubber band in his pocket. Muriel Morton, with her head cradled against her hand felt an intrusive midge which had come in the open window chew her leg above the knee, and put down a curved finger to lift her skirt and scratch it briefly.

Niles Gowamley's blond blitz head, bent over the tick-tat-toe paper with Gloria Glick's auburn tresses, brushed foreheads with her briefly, with one of those brief ardent looks of young love which fortunately are so fleeting that their bug-eyed and drooling appearance seldom registers on the consciousness.

Leaping Leander Leverwaite, the hurdling star, was vaulting over a chair on his way across the room. The electric clock upon the wall stood at just half past two.

There was that strange tingling in little Noel Gouf's nerves, and in his

bones. The bones, the solid flesh of him, seemed to melt and rush together.

"Let us draw this line, continuing it—"

He drew a swift corkscrewing parabola. His hand went in through the blackboard, following the swift line he had been drawing, and which had receded in.

"Well, I'll be jigged!" he gasped, dropping his chalk.

The blackboard was like rubber or jelly. More like a translucent plasm, it might be called. The chalk line he had drawn had gone in like a corkscrew, unwinding like a spool of thread, to arm's length in front of him. He reached in and caught hold of the spiraling end of it, and tied it in a knot!

"Q. E. D.!" he said breathlessly. "*Quod erat demonstrandum!* What was to be demonstrated! Ladies and gentlemen, the fourth dimension!"

He turned around, beaming, dizzy, to face the classroom. A boomerang-shaped cardboard stinger from Billy Camorra's rubber band was coming at his face from just three feet away. The rubber was still stretched forward in its snap from the fork of Billy's fingers.

Muriel Morton's bright red index fingernail rested on her white knee, hooked in a delicate scratching gesture, an inch from a nimble and wary midge which hung motionless above her knuckle. Niles Gowamley and Gloria Glick had their noses pressed together, their eyes swimming into each other's, grinning idiotically.

Leander Leverwaite was just jumping over a desk on his way from one aisle to another. Six inches above the desk, with legs neatly folded, he remained motionless, as if kneeling on an invisible pillow. The humming of insects outside had ceased. The clock stood at just half past two.

"Well, I'll be rum-jiggered!" said little Noel Gouf.

He had penetrated Time. Time was the fourth dimension, of course, as Einstein had always said. Somehow he had solved the enigma of it. At least, had

penetrated it. He walked forward, a little dazedly, on rubber feet that seemed to have no foundation beneath him.

"Watch the old goof," he heard a voice in the motionless, silent classroom air as he moved forward.

He paused, and bent his head back.

"Watch," was in his ear. He moved his head an inch forward.

"The old goof," was in his ear. He moved his head a little more forward, scooping with his ear.

"Jump when this hits him," the lazy sentence was finished.

CHAPTER III

Quod Erat Demonstrandum

NO ONE was speaking. No lips moved. Leaping Leander remained in motionless flight six inches above the desk he had been clearing. The midge which had itched Muriel Morton remained poised an inch above her curved finger. The rubber band, snapping forward in its propulsive bound, remained motionless in Billy Camorra's forked fingers. The missile which Billy had shot remained motionless in the air.

The voice, of course, was the sound waves of Billy's voice, frozen motionless in the air. The first word he had uttered farthest from him. The rest of them going right down to his slack grinning mouth.

The air was crisscross with other sound waves, some of them tangled together like invisible coils of tape. By pushing his ear forward, this way and that, tiptoeing around the room, Noel Gouf could pick them up. Moving toward the windows, he could even pick up the hum of bees again, poised motionless on motionless wings above the delphinium spikes outside.

The clock stood still. The sun stood still. Time stood still. It was the fourth dimension, and he had penetrated

it!

He flipped his thumbnail on Billy Camorra's nose with stinging force.

"You garterless overgrown grinning half-wit," he said. "I'd like to kick you in the seat of the pants, for all the trouble you've given me."

Six-foot Billy, sitting slumped with one leg over the other, continued his unchanging grin.

Noel Gouf went out the class room door, taking a deep breath and squaring his shoulders. He passed by Principal MacGlurk's office on his way to the school front door. Inside he saw Miss Peavy, MacGlurk's secretary, sitting with her sharp-pointed pencil poised above her notebook.

"Jawbone" MacGlurk was dictating to her. He had been pacing up and down, as was his custom, jingling coins in his hand, with his long jaw extended while he orated. He had paused in the instant to stoop and pick up from the floor a nickel he had dropped.

Noel Gouf caught a word coming out, as he tiptoed by.

"Professor Gouf—"

He started, in mortal terror. Jawbone MacGlurk had terrorized him for ten years. The man's mean, malicious mind had squeezed his brain. MacGlurk's sadistic pleasure in exercising authority and inflicting hurt had petrified his spirit. The sight of, and even the name of MacGlurk was enough to make him cringe.

But MacGlurk was not speaking to him, of course. He was not aware of him, through the fourth dimension. They were just words that the bony jawboned principal of Stratton High had been dictating, the sound waves of them in the air.

With a bent ear, Noel Gouf went quietly into the sacrosanct precincts, scooping up the motionless waves of sound and toward MacGlurk's stooped form and downward bent countenance.

"Professor Gouf is a man totally unable to maintain discipline, and for that reason, if none other, I would find it impossible to recommend him for the posi-

tion. Period. New paragraph. In the larger view, he is a man of a highly impractical—"

Little Noel Gouf had followed the sound waves right down Principal MacGlurk's bent bald head and the tight, twisted mouth in MacGlurk's long bony jaw. He had to kneel beside MacGlurk's motionless figure to scoop in the last word which had been uttered. The rest of them were still in MacGlurk's larynx and in his brain.

HE arose with a trembling mouth, and tears in his eyes. He had given MacGlurk's name as a recommendation when he had applied for the teaching position at the state Defective Institution. Only fifteen hundred a year, and the life would be rather awful.

But with the children now grown up and self-supporting, somehow he and Jessie might have got along on it. Now MacGlurk wouldn't even recommend him for that miserable starvation job, after twenty-nine years.

"You—you jaw-boned old toad," he whispered, almost crying. "I feel like —"

Well, he could actually do it. MacGlurk remained there stooped, with his rear end lifted in the air, and the seat of his pants stretched tight, as he reached for his nickel.

Professor Noel Gouf lifted back his right foot, and swung it with all the solidiy of his short, stubby frame against the spot indicated. Principal MacGlurk did not move, did not change

expression, still reaching for the nickel he had dropped.

Noel Gouf went out the ornate Gothic entrance of the Stratton High School into the bright warm day. Motionless insects on motionless wings hung in the air. Motionless motor cars stood on the streets, with motionless blue exhaust coming from their pipes, with motionless wheels spurning the pavements.

Motionless pedestrians were frozen on the sidewalks. Motionless waves glinted with motionless sunlight on the blue little river. Motionless wind blew motionless factory smokes.

He went down the street. He went skimming. His bones were melted. His feet were bottomless and rubber. He moved at first at his brisk little pace of thirty inches to the step, but soon found that he could take thirty feet as easily, or three hundred, or any amount that he desired to. That fourth dimension, which he had penetrated, made all other dimensions valueless, like the chalk line which would have been a wall to two-dimensional people.

It was two-thirty. It was two-thirty of the afternoon. The stock market in New York across the river wouldn't close for half an hour. The first and most important thing in his life was to find out whether SI preferred, Sundersohn Industries preferred, on which he had staked so much, every dollar that he had and more, had gone up since he had bought his two hundred shares at seventy this morning, or whether it had gone down, and he was due for jail. He went

[Turn page]



skimming to the Stratton commuting station, trying to remember what was the next train out.

No trains were running, of course. But he didn't need a train. It was hard to adjust himself to that. To realize it at once, completely. He went skimming to the Hudson's shore fifteen miles away, and across the river, skating above motionless waves past motionless ferries, dodging motionless gulls poised over the water.

The clock overlooking the Battery and the tall towers of financial Manhattan said half past two. The sun stood still.

"It's amazing," he whispered to himself. "It's perfectly amazing. It's—well, it's wonderful."

He didn't need to hurry so. He had all the time in the world. Before going to his brokers, Skiddy Merton & Co., whose offices were up town, he might as well drop in and see the offices of the Sandersohn Industries themselves, in the great Sandersohn building down overlooking the harbor.

THE revolving doors were motionless, filled with motionless people going in and coming out. He went through the glass panel of the locked side door. The elevators were motionless, but he went up the stairs, three, and seventeen, and fifty at a time, and seven whole flights within a step.

He went through glass-paneled doors past motionless secretaries, into the private office of B. B. Sandersohn, who had been Butch Sandersohn in his class at Stratton High thirty-three years ago, and hadn't even been able to add A plus B together, but had added together five million dollars.

In the directors' room off Butch's private office a dozen men sat around the big board table at lunch. They spooned ice cream to their mouths motionlessly. They drank from tilted highball glasses out of which no liquid poured.

Butch Sandersohn, big, bald, powerful, with shrewd pale eyes, stood at the head of the table, with the knuckles of his left hand resting on a sheaf of papers.

The red point of the cigar in his right hand, which he held out before him in a declamatory gesture, did not burn in this timeless space, and yet it did not die.

"We are agreed, gentlemen, on the necessity," Noel Gouf scooped in Butch Sandersohn's booming voice as he came through the door.

"Pardon me," he murmured.

He had come through in such haste and curiosity that he had failed to notice that one of the directors was standing on the inside of the door, with his hand on the bolt, locking it. He had come right through the man.

He was Skiddy Merton, old Skiddy with his amiable bubble brain, who didn't know what a cosine was yet, but had made a pile of money on the market, more even than Butch Sandersohn. Gouf hadn't hurt Skiddy, going through him that way. Skiddy hadn't even noticed. Still it was the polite thing to beg pardon.

He went toward Butch Sandersohn at the far end of the table, scooping up Butch's booming sound waves with his ear, stepping through the table and the men seated around it with little murmurs of apology.

"The necessity of declaring no dividend at all on the preferred," he scooped up Butch's sound waves hanging motionless in the air, "in consideration of the serious tax outlook and the fact that profits have been much below preliminary estimates. To insure no unfair advantage among ourselves, we will wait to make our announcement till after the market's close, I think we are agreed. However, I rather imagine that most of us have had some forewarning, and have already succeeded in disposing, at the recent not unfavorable market—"

They were not going to declare the huge thirty-dollar dividend on the preferred, or any dividend at all. They were going to pass it again. They had known all along that they were going to pass it. They had just spread the rumor of the big dividend, so that they would have a market among the little

speculators to unload their stock.

Noel Gouf pushed his face right up through the ring of cigar smoke which stood motionless in front of Butch Sundersohn's mouth, but that was the last word out. Butch had paused to blow his cigar ring before resuming.

"Butch!" Noel Gouf said. "For Pete's sake, Butch, aren't you really going to declare it?"

HE WAS panic-stricken. The stock would drop thirty points. He would lose six thousand dollars, two thousand more than he had. He would go to jail for life, and Jessie would starve. He clutched Butch Sundersohn's lapel, trying to shake Butch's large impassive frame.

"Butch!" he cried. "This is Brains Gouf, Butch. You remember me. The little guy who was in your high school class at Stratton thirty-three years ago. The one who always got the As. I'm here in the fourth dimension, Butch. Listen to me! I've sunk everything. I've gone overboard. I got the tip straight from Skiddy Merton's own head office that the dividend would surely be declared, and I might make two thousand dollars! Please do something about it, Butch!"

He was almost crying. Butch Sundersohn remained stolid and impassive, with shrewd, cold-wrinkled eyes looking beyond him, with the cigar ring unbroken in front of his round mouth. He did not move to Noel Gouf's frantic shaking. His face was unchanged.

"For gosh sake," thought the little man, releasing him. "This isn't any time to him at all, of course. I'm not even here. Any more than a man peering over the walls of a two-dimension house would be there to a two-dimension person. It's hard to keep it straight."

He got out his handkerchief and wiped his forehead. He poured himself a glass of water from a carafe on the table, and drank it.

"Well, so long," he said.

He straightened his shoulders and

went out through the wall, stepping from the parapet of the Sundersohn building to the top of the Woolworth tower, and skating from here to the Empire State thirty blocks up town, and rolling over on his back and floating from there to the tall-clustered spires of Rockefeller Center, a mile farther on.

He got out there on the eighty-seventh floor and walked sedately down the stairs, eighty-three flights of them, one step at a time. There was such a thing as carrying anything to excess in the way of speed. He needed time to think.

CHAPTER IV

While Time Stood Still

LITTLE Professor Gouf was tired and breathless and his calf muscles were wobbling when he entered the offices of Skiddy Merton & Co. down on the fourth floor. The clock in the board room said half past two. The huge green board with threefold wings had eight hundred big board stocks listed on it, with a few selected curbs, and wheat, oats, cotton, and lard. Opening price, low price, high price, and latest price for each stock.

In big leather lounge chairs facing the board the traders sat, watching the motionless translux tape. At the trading counter the customers' men stood, at telephones, with pencils poised, with changeless smiles upon their faces, in that changeless instant.

Noel Gouf's eyes went roving to Industrials. SI pfd. had opened at 77 $\frac{3}{8}$, which was also its low for the day. Its last and high were the same, 79 $\frac{1}{2}$. Tomorrow morning it would open at about 50. Or maybe 40 or below. It was going to be a cold, freezing day in SI pfd. when the word got out that that hoped-for dividend had been passed.

He went to the counter, where his customer's man, old Grilby, looking like a decayed nineteen-hundred-style con-

fidence man in bright striped shirt, bright checked suit, and diamond horse-shoe stickpin stood. Grilby was smiling, with pencil poised over a black-printed order blank on the counter before him, and a telephone at his ear.

"How is SI preferred acting, Mr. Grilby?" said the sound waves, clustered around the telephone.

"Up. Up. All the boys seem to be crazy about it." The sound waves of Grilby's voice, rising up and down in the air like a roller-coaster, came joyously.

He was an optimist, Mr. Grilby, as a customer's man should be, and it was all a roller-coaster to him.

The black pads were the buy orders. In shaking anxiety Noel Gouf reached for a red-printed pad on the counter, and wrote on it:

Sell to account of Noel Gouf 200
SI pfd. at market.

He pushed it beneath old Grilby's pencil, and wiped his forehead. Selling at the market meant selling at whatever price happened to be bid. If the last price was $79\frac{1}{2}$, though, he ought to get $78\frac{1}{2}$, anyway.

Allowing half a point for taxes and commissions in buying and selling, that would just about clear him, after having bought this morning at 78. If the market price was half a point more, he might even make a hundred dollars. He had escaped losing thousands, anyway, and more than he had, and going to jail.

He wiped his forehead again, and pulled back the red pad. Beneath the order he had written he wrote further:

Sell 200 SI pfd. short at market.

He pushed it under old Grilby's pencil again. Wiping his sweating hands, he went tiptoeing out, afraid that some police officers' hand would reach out and pinch him before he had gained the door.

He walked down the stairs, and went out upon the street, still a little dazed. A cop's whistle made him jump. But it was only a track of sound waves which

he had run into from the traffic policeman at the corner, directing the motionless traffic with motionless hand up-raised. He looked absently at his watch. It was still half past two.

His daughter Caroline had had a luncheon engagement at the Pigeon Club today, he remembered, with Allison Clouber, the powerful young labor politician to whom she was engaged. She and Clouber might still be lingering at lunch.

HE TURNED down the side street on which the Pigeon Club was located, passing through the door and through the admiral-uniformed doorman, who was just starting hurriedly out, with hand uplifted and a whistle to his lips, to signal a passing cab.

Caroline and Clouber were sitting at a table in an alcove. An empty bottle that had held champagne showed that they had been celebrating. Caroline had her glass half lifted to her lips. Her eyes were bright. Her face was smiling. She was so much like what her mother had been at nineteen that the sight of her always tore old Noel Gouf's heart. He had been only a failure to Caroline, a despised cipher in her existence. It was no wonder she had chosen a man so different.

The luncheon bill was in front of Clouber on its silver platter. With one hand on his coat lapel he had pulled out his pocketbook. Inadvertently, he had pulled out a letter from his inside breast pocket with it, too. His broad, pale face, powerful and big-jawed, was smiling a little quizzically as he glanced down at the letter behind his pulled-out lapel.

"We'll take the plane for St. Louis this afternoon, Caroline." The sound waves of his voice hung motionless in the air. "You'd like to meet my sister."

The letter which he had pulled out and was glancing down at was on pink paper with a blue deckle edge. The writing on it was in violet ink.

Noel Gouf had always had a strong prejudice against reading other persons' letters. But anything written on deckle-

edged pink paper with violet ink had nothing sacrosanct about it. He removed it gently but firmly from Clouber's big, square, well-manicured hand, without even a murmur of apology. He read:

Dear Al,

How much longer you going play that judge's secatery, that Goof girl? Your wasting time. A Dame like that ante going to give you no inside Info about the case their building up against you for Rakateering without you get her in a box & under your Thumb.

wrinkled beast of a young man.

Perhaps if she read it herself, she would understand something in it. She was young, but she was wiser in so many ways than her father. Gently plump little Professor Noel Gouf removed the half-lifted champagne glass from her hand, and set it down on the tablecloth. He inserted the pink sheet opened in her hand, before her smiling face.

He started out the door of the Pi-

Barney Barringer Was Fading—

MILLIONS OF tiny electric needles pricked at every cell of his body as he tumbled backward—

BACKWARD into the effectual zone of the telematerio's radiations. He tried to scream. Everything grew hazy. But beneath his fear his mind was telling him the truth. He was being broadcast—where?

FREEZING cold . . . indescribably swift motion . . . and his brain, its molecules torn asunder, blacked out. Barney Barringer was an

EXILE TO CENTAURI

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You bring her out to St. Loo where I break her for you like I broke others.

Your loving wife,

Madame Sally Lou.

Little Noel Gouf read the violet ink on the pink paper over with a feeling creeping horror. What it meant or what it suggested was something quite outside the range of his mathematics, and not less out of his own simple personal experiences in life. Still it gave him a feeling of some dark and brutalizing horror which threatened his lovely young Caroline, from this great pale,

geon Club, and bumped into the door-man still rushing out in motionless silence, with his hand lifted and his silent whistle in his lips. With a thought he removed the whistle from the door-man's lips.

He went back to the table where Caroline and Clouber sat. Picking up a napkin, he wiped the whistle diligently. He dunked it in a water glass, rinsing it, and wiped it off again. As a last measure, he immersed it in Caroline's champagne. Champagne had alcohol in it, he was sure, and alcohol is sterilizing.

ONCE having taken these precautions, he placed it between Caroline's smiling and half-parted lips. He spat into his palm, and doubled up his right fist. He swung it straight at young Clouber's broad white nose, and wrung his knuckles when the blow had landed. Young Clouber remained smiling ironically, still looking down at his half-extracted purse and the pink letter which was no longer in his hand.

Rubbing his bruised knuckles, little Professor Noel Gouf went marching out of the Pigeon Club again, going through the wall this time so as not to go through the doorman.

The motionless sun was bright above. The day was at perfection. In this timeless space the weather could not change. No cloud could come. No drop of rain could fall. Little Professor Noel Gouf walked up Broadway, through a city of seven million people where no one walked or moved but him, enjoying the fine balmy afternoon June weather.

The sound waves of a loudspeaker horn above a radio shop, playing "Deep in the Heart of Texas," were seined up by his ear. He looked at his watch, and it was just half past two.

"I could make it out there and back in no time," he muttered to himself, in he way that he had had, for thirty years, of muttering at his blackboard while he worked out his problems. "Texas is only two thousand miles away, after all. Yes, out there and back in no time. I've always wanted to see it."

He started out, sauntering up Broadway to the George Washington bridge six miles to the north, and sauntering across the bridge, enjoying the motionless sparkle of the motionless sunlight on the motionless river deep below. He paused to cut himself a walking stick when he had reached the Jersey side, and then started out for Texas.

It was difficult to explain. He himself found it somewhat difficult to explain, with all his mathematical knowledge. But by penetrating time, and thereby reducing all the other dimen-

sions of reality to chalk marks, it didn't really make any difference how far he went, or at what speed he went.

It didn't make any difference whether he sauntered slowly along country roads, enjoying wild flowers and scooping his ear to catch the sound waves of singing birds, or whether he paused and meditated; or whether he skated gracefully above the treetops in mile-long skimming strokes, or whether he tried a trudgeon crawl and went plowing through the air with a scissors kick, overtaking motionless hawks and stationary formations of combat planes and frozen lightning bolts in his swift progress.

It didn't make any difference whether it was two hundred feet or two thousand miles he went, either. For the time that it took him to go anywhere, at whatever speed, was just exactly nothing.

So he started out for Texas, not going like a wild hawk, nor like a plane, nor like a bullet nor a lightning bolt, for even the last takes a measurable eleven thousands of a second to go two thousand miles. And it was taking him just exactly no time at all.

He started out walking, swinging the walking stick that he had cut, leisurely enjoying the scenery on the ground or floating through the air when his legs got a little tired. At the end of precisely no time, at two-thirty Eastern War Time, one-thirty Central War Time, he was at Collins Field in Texas, where his son Tom was stationed as a flying instructor.

IN JUST precisely no time he was there from the Pigeon Club. In precisely no time from the board room of Skiddy Merton & Co., and in no time from the directors' room of Sundersohn Industries. And in no time from old Jawbone MacGlurk's office and his own class room in the Stratton High School in the pleasant little town of Stratton, on the sparkling river two thousand miles away.

He was out there in Texas in no time, a hundred feet above the ground, which

was a bad patch of rocky ground. His hand was on the cockpit edge of a training plane which was poised motionless in the air with its nose down and its wings sideways, and its ailerons and flippers and rudder all twisted in what seemed to him, with his mathematical mind, somewhat peculiar and irrational positions.

He was holding on to the cockpit edge, and looking at the wrenched terrified face of a student pilot in the rear seat of the trainer. The student was clinging with both hands to the control stick hard against his belt in a stone grip like death, with motionless drops of saliva spouting from the edges of his wide-open mouth, and sound waves frozen in the motionless air about his mouth. They were discernible even in the great rocky corrugated sound waves of the plane's motor.

"I want to go home!" his sound waves screamed.

CHAPTER V

Back to Work

FIRST Lieutenant Tom Gouf, in the front seat, was looking around, his hand gripping the dual stick in his cockpit, and trying to force it forward from him. A twisted and considerably alarmed look was frozen on his lean, hard, brown face.

"Hello, Tom," said little Noel Gouf, apologetically. "I'm here in the fourth dimension. It was such a pleasant day that I thought I'd pop out and see you."

Tom made no reply to him, sat there with that motionless glare.

"I don't mean to butt in with my theories," said little Noel Gouf, still apologetically. "But it seems to me that, speaking in terms of pure abstract mathematics, the position of line of flight of your plane in relation to the direct line of gravity forms an extremely acute angle—which, if continued, would cause

your line AB to meet the ground line CD almost perpendicularly, and with considerable force.

"I know nothing about flying, of course. Still the proper maintenance of the Kv curve is a mathematical formula. I thought that perhaps you wouldn't mind if I pointed out to you the mathematics of the situation."

Tom's frozen face glared back. The professor edged up along the fuselage toward Tom's cockpit timidly. Tom had always hated for him to give any advice.

"Let go," Tom's sound waves came into his ear as he moved up toward him. "That stick! You crazy fool!"

"Goodness gracious," said little Professor Noel Gouf, rubbing his chin. "The young fellow is really quite crazy with fright, isn't he? And he has seized the controls and has swerved your plane into this most singular and mathematically absurd position. And the ground is extremely close. At a speed of approximately two hundred miles per hour, you will hit in approximately three hundred and seventeen thousandths of a second. With disastrous consequences, I presume, since the force of impact is in proportion to the square of the speed. Let me think a moment."

But there were no moments at all, of course, to think. He stood with his foot on the cockpit stirrup, rubbing his chin and analyzing all the mathematics of it, muttering to himself, while no moment passed, and then another.

"I have it," he said. "Just wait a moment. No moment, I mean."

He dropped down to the stony ground, and looked around. He selected a smooth oblong-shaped flint rock, after due reflection, of about two pounds in weight, which fitted nicely into his palm. He was back beside Tom's plane again in no time.

"Pardon me," he said.

He put one hand upon the side of the head of the bug-eyed, screaming student. He struck a little tap with the stone just back of that petrified young man's ear.

"Dear me," he said. "I hope that's firm enough. Perhaps I had better repeat it, though, for good measure and a little more emphatically."

He gave a somewhat more vigorous and impressive tap, with nicely calculated force. The motionless student with mouth open continued his soundless screaming, still clutching the stick in that timeless instant. However, when time began again he would be, Professor Noel Gouf felt, sufficiently well taken care of. He tossed away the rock, which remained motionless in the air a few feet away.

"I really believe that should do it, Tom," he said. "Hope I haven't bothered you."

HE LOOKED at the watch on Tom's wrist, and it said half past one. He looked at his own watch, and it said half past two. He was walking down the shady side of Maple Street in Stratton toward the high school a block away, still looking at his watch. His legs felt quite tired. As near as he could remember, he had walked the whole way from Texas.

Along the shady sidewalk, he saw a tall brisk white-bearded figure striding toward him. A white beard parted in the middle, and combed out in big puffs upon each side. A pair of steel-rimmed dark blue glasses, the color of eye-cup glass, over a pair of glittering eagle eyes. An old and bony figure, walking with a little hop.

Little Professor Noel Gouf had not seen him for almost thirty years. But it could be none other than Dr. Alcibiades Hoogstetter, the head of the Mathematics Department of the Graduate School; the great savant.

"Bless my soul, if it isn't young Gouf," said old Hoogstetter, stopping and shaking hands with him heartily. "I was just thinking of you, Gouf. I am retiring, and none of the other young fellows seem to fit into my shoes. I have always expected you to take over after me. I inquired about you, but they told me you had left the Graduate

School, and were now in Stratton. It took me a little by surprise."

"I left Graduate School twenty-nine years ago, Doctor," said little Noel Gouf with a trembling mouth.

"Indeed?" the old man said. "Time flies. It's quite difficult to keep track of it. I had a birthday only the other day, or maybe it was a few years back. I thought that I was forty-two, but they told me I was eighty-one. Felt like a perfect fool. I thought that I had seen you around the Yard only yesterday, Gouf, or the day before, but you tell me it's been months. What have you been doing in mathematics in recent weeks?"

Little Noel Gouf drew himself up to his full height. He took a deep breath.

"I have discovered the fourth dimension, doctor," he said quietly.

Old Hoogstetter nodded absently. "Good—good!" he said. "I was sure you would. You were right on the tail of it. Write me your mathematical computations, and I will check them over. A fascinating discovery. It's good, of course, for a doctorate. But that would hardly be required of you, Gouf. I have the full authority to name my successor, and I have always had you in mind for it, as I told you only yesterday."

"Twenty-nine years ago, doctor," said little Noel Gouf.

"Well, well, time flies. I had a birthday the other day, and they told me I was ninety-seven. I thought I was still thirteen. But think the matter over, Gouf. I'll write you a confirming letter offering you the post. In fact, I'll have my secretary take a letter right now. What is your address, you say? Stratton, New Jersey? Where is that?"

"You're right there now, Doctor."

"Yes, I'll have her write to you at once. Well, good day to you, Gouf."

"Wait a minute!" said little Noel Gouf, as old Dr. Alcibiades Hoogstetter lifted his hat courteously and turned away, going absently around a corner three steps distant. "Wait a minute Doctor! How the dickens are you walking and talking—"

He ran around the corner after the

brisk old man.

"Hey, wait a minute!"

But there were no minutes to wait. In no time the brisk old figure of Dr. Hoogstetter had vanished.

LITTLE Noel Gouf turned back, considerably bewildered, and resumed his course down Maple Street. Really, any way he looked at it, it was most inexplicable. It was almost supernatural, that Dr. Hoogstetter should talk to him that way, and then abruptly vanish. He had never heard of such an extraordinary happening in his life.

He was almost at the high school steps when he saw the slight little figure of the Reverend Holmes, the new youthful pastor of the church which Jessie attended, walking toward him along the timeless and motionless street, with hands clasped behind him, head bowed in meditation. Would wonders never cease?

"Good afternoon, Parson," said little Noel Gouf.

"Oh, good afternoon, Professor. I was just thinking over my sermon."

"I have solved the riddle of the fourth dimension," said little Noel Gouf, with shy pride. "But of course you have, too, haven't you, or you wouldn't be here?"

The young clergyman nodded absently. "Yes, yes," he said. "There's really nothing to it. Amusing little experiment at times, though, to get us out of ourselves."

"I just came from Texas," said Noel Gouf.

"I just came from China," said the young clergyman. "Norway. Abyssinia. I am on my way down to East Peoria, where my dear old aunt lives. Glad to have seen you, Professor."

He walked on down shady Maple Street, with his hands clasped behind him, still pacing and meditating. Slowly pacing, he walked up into the air, and went whisking away over the roofs of Stratton like a bullet.

Little Professor Noel Gouf wiped his forehead, and turned into the high school's Gothic doors. He passed by

Principal Jawbone MacGlurk's office door, and MacGlurk was still stooped over inside, still reaching for his nickel. Little Professor Noel Gouf stopped in again, and delivered another mighty kick to the surface so prominently displayed, before proceeding on.

He went into his classroom in Senior Math. Nothing there had changed. The clock on the wall still stood at half past two. The spitball from Billy Camorra's rubber band still hung in the air three feet from where he had been standing at the blackboard. Muriel Morton still scratched her milk-white thigh. Niles Gowamley and Gloria Glick still had their noses and foreheads pressed together. Leaping Leander still sailed in motionless grace six inches above the chair.

Professor Noel Gouf paused. He got out a box of matches from his pocket. He struck one. It lit instantly, with a motionless flame, though it did not burn. He stooped, and inserted it in Niles Gowamley's hip pocket. He struck another, and inserted it in Leaping Leander's shoe, curled gracefully beneath him.

He struck a third, and after reflection tucked it gently into the sole of Billy Camorra's shoe, with just the flame extruding. He flipped his thumbnail on Billy's nose again.

He went back up to his blackboard a little hurriedly. He would have to complete the diagram and set down the mathematical formula while it was still clear in his mind—the diagram and the mathematical formula of the fourth dimension. He bent down to pick up the piece of chalk that he had dropped. . . .

IN THE directors' room of Sundersohn Industries, Inc., big Butch Sundersohn laid down his burning cigar, and blew away the smoke ring which drifted slowly six inches in front of his big face.

"Two-thirty now, even," he said. "We'll play fair with the public by holding the news till after the market closes. That's just a half hour more."

At the door Skiddy Merton, turning the bolt, said: "Curse it, something went right through me. I don't know what."

He clicked the bolt and turned around from the door, resuming his seat at the table again.

"A lot of little margin speculators are going to be hit," he said. "They've been hopping on SI preferred for a free ride. There's a little bug-eyed guy I used to know in college. Named something Gouf. Valedictorian of the class, first marshal of Phi Beta, one of these infant prodigies.

"He came to me last week, a seedy little fellow, a high school teacher, with a few thousand bucks that he wanted to put into a margin account and make fifty thousand out of. Somebody had given him a tip on Sundersohn preferred, and he asked me about it. I couldn't tell him anything, naturally. I just told him to watch it. I almost wish now I had told him to lay off."

"Why?" said Butch Sundersohn. "Sooner or later a guy like that is bound to lose it. He doesn't know the inside."

He picked up his cigar again, sitting down in his seat at the head of the table.

"I went to high school with him, myself," he said. "They used to call him Brains. Funny, I was thinking of him just this minute. Hadn't thought of him in thirty years, I guess. Teaching high school, is he? That's where they all end up. A theoretical guy like that, they never amount to much."

"The thought of him went right through me," said Skiddy Merton.

CHAPTER VI

Guardian Angel

IN Skiddy Merton & Co.'s board room the half-past two bell bonged. Old Grilby, the customers' man, put down his phone. With his flashy horseshoe tie pin, his flashy striped shirt and gambler's checked suit, he couldn't possibly be dishonest. Customers' men who wear

blue serge suits and black ties and who look like undertakers are the ones to watch.

Old Grilby had just given a quote on SI preferred to a rich widow, one of his most successful traders, and she had given him an order to buy five hundred shares. He reached for the black pad to put the order down, and saw the red "sell" pad on the counter right beneath his pencil.

"I must be getting old," he said to a confrere beside him at the counter. "Here's one I overlooked."

An order to sell two hundred SI pfd. at the market, and to sell two thousand additional short, for that seedy little new customer, Noel Gouf of Stratton. He initialed it, and rushed out to the phone desk to have it transmitted down to the exchange floor for execution.

He glanced across at the moving translux and the big quote board with its snapping prices, when he had returned to his station. He read the morning translux figures:

SI preferred 79% . . . Two hundred 6 . . .
One hundred 7 . . . Five hundred 80 . . . Five
hundred at $\frac{1}{8}$.

"Are they grabbing it!" he enthused. "They're going wild. It will never stop. I'm going to buy five shares of it myself. It'll hit ninety tomorrow morning, when the big dividend is declared. Hey, that fool is going to lose twenty thousand dollars!"

"What fool?" said the adjacent customers' man.

"Fellow just started an account this week," said old Grilby. "Made a few trades, lost a thousand. He bought a couple of lots of SI preferred this morning on my recommendation, and when he has made a point or two he loses his nerve. Sells out. Goes overboard on the other side, and sells two thousand short. He's going to lose twenty thousand dollars."

"Is he good for it?"

"He who sells what isn't his'n, must pay for it or go to pris'n," Grilby hummed the old song softly. "Well, he

must be good for it. Seedy little fellows like that generally have plenty tucked away in the sock. They save on clothes, that's how they have money."

"Sold two thousand short," said the other customers' man, in some alarm, thinking it over. "I've got ten shares of SI puffed myself. Wonder if he had any inside information?"

"How could he have? He doesn't have any Street connections. He's just a mathematical shark at some little jerk-water high school out in Jersey."

"A mathematical shark. Two thousand is a big lump. If they don't declare a dividend, he's going to make about sixty thousand dollars by tomorrow morning."

"Listen," said old Grilby uncertainly, "Sundersohn is going to pay that dividend. It's going up and up. And up. Nothing can stop it. Look at me. I know. Who made two million dollars in Twenty-nine by riding them up and up?"

"Show me two dollars now that you own," said the other customers' man unsympathetically. "I think I'll cash in on my little ten shares myself. Just for luck."

ILD GRILBY went out to the order desk, to confirm the execution of Gouf's order. It had gone through, two hundred shares at a little less than eighty, two thousand shares short at a little more.

"He must have known something," he whispered to himself.

He watched the translux out in the board room. SI pfd. was hovering around '0 and a quarter. There were a lot of buyers, but there was also a lot of stock. Old Grilby picked up his phone, and began calling his customers.

"SI preferred doesn't look so good," he said cautiously. "There's a rumor going around. A big short sale. It might be just as well to take your profits—"

The hunch had come to him from where all hunches and Wall Street tips come from. From the fourth dimension. . . .

In the Pigeon Club, Caroline Gouf smiled at Allison Clouber across the table from her. He was so big and crude and strong. His very ugliness had a charm for her. He was some kind of an outlaw, quite likely, but there was a boldness and daring about him which fascinated her. All the girls she knew were crazy about him.

She lifted up her wine glass and smiled, as the clock pointed to half past two. The waiter had set down the luncheon reckoning on the table before Al. He reached into his pocket for his bill-fold, with his quizzical smile.

Suddenly blood spurted from his nose, and his head jerked back. He glared at her.

"What did you do that for?" he snarled. "What are you doing with that blasted whistle in your mush? Where did you get that letter? Curse you, don't you try to tie me up with Sally Lou!"

He was on his feet, with his blood-dripping nose, glaring at her with terrible eyes. She thought she had a wine glass in her hand, but it was a pink letter with violet ink.

"Oh!"

She started to exhale her breath. A police blast came from her startled lips. Al struck at her with a swinging fist. He was leaping, a pistol coming from his pocket. Men were running at him. She arose with a frightened gasp, pulling the whistle from her lips, as Al went down beneath a flying horde.

A man kneeling on the floor looked up at her.

"You're from Judge Barnaby's office, aren't you?" he said. "We've been tailing him. We've been trying to tie him up with a traffic out in St. Louis, in which too many girls have disappeared, but he's always been too smart for us. Have you got hold of some letter of his, some written document? That was quick work, Miss, blowing that police whistle. And you are a brave girl to have gone out with him alone."

"I guess I have a guardian angel," she gasped. "I g-guess I have—"

She burst into tears. She went out.

crying, with some young man supporting her.

"I want to go home," she said. "I want to go home. . . ."

The rushing ground was whirling up a hundred feet below the whipping plane, down there in Texas. Pushing the frozen stick and the jammed rudder bar with all his strength, Tom Gouf yelled at the paralyzed screaming fool behind him, for his life.

"Let go that stick!"

THE loco student's head dropped sideward. He had fainted. The stick was loose in Tom's grasp within the instant, and he pushed it down. Nose rushing at the ground, the ship straightened from its spin. He brought its nose back as its belly scraped along the rushing rocky ground, and lifted it in a zoom.

"That was about the longest moment of my life!" he muttered, sweating. "I must have a guardian angel somewhere."

He still had a curious feeling, a curious eerie feeling which would be with him all his life, that he had seen a rock, a smooth two-pound flint rock, dropping aimlessly in empty space two feet away from his tail surfaces in that instant as the loco student fainted and he had got the controls again.

Maybe it was a meteorite that had dropped down, for there was a contusion on the white-faced, retching student's head, just back of his right ear, when they had returned to the field and landed. But it would seem that a meteorite, falling from outer space, would have hit harder than just to tap him. . . .

In his study at Cambridge, Massachusetts, old Dr. Alcibiades Hoogstetter swung around in his big leather swivel chair.

"I was meditating a moment," he said to his secretary, combing his white beard. "Will you take a letter to Professor Noel Gouf, Stratton High School, Stratton, New Jersey. 'Dear Gouf—I am ready to retire, and it has occurred to me that you might be interested. As I once mentioned to you, I have always had you in mind as my successor. How are you

progressing in your theory of the fourth dimension? I always felt that you had something there. Sincerely yours.' . . ."

In his office in the Stratton High School, Principal Jawbone MacGlurk, pacing up and down and jingling coins as he dictated, stooped to pick up a nickel he had dropped. He fell flat upon his face, and plowed forward across the floor on his chin.

He arose, rather lamely, bending over and feeling the seat of his pants, while Miss Peavy, his secretary, burst into screams of laughter, and threw her notebook over her shoulder, and threw her pencil at the ceiling.

"I've lived for this day," she said.

"You're fired," said MacGlurk.

She screamed with laughter. "You've got splinters in your chin. . . ."

Little Professor Noel Gouf stooped and picked up the chalk which he had dropped. He had drawn a three dimensional cube on the blackboard, ABCD-EFGH, like the outline of a glass box seen in perspective. Then his chalk had slipped, and had described a meaningless corkscrewing parabola, trailing off to nowhere, as it fell from his grasp.

"Let us imagine," he said straightening up, with the retrieved chalk in his grasp, "that this is a three-dimensional solid—"

Something thudded against the back of his head with a hurtling sting which brought the tears into his eyes. He turned around meekly to the class room.

The clock ticked. Outside the open windows bees and other insects hummed. Leaping Leander was just descending into the aisle from vaulting over a chair. Muriel Morton was pulling down the hem of her skirt briefly and discreetly. Niles Gowamley, the big blond blitz football captain, and Gloria Glick separated their heads, bent together over their tick-tat-toe game. Just for an instant their foreheads had brushed.

BILLY CAMORRA, slumped grinning in his seat with a long lanky garterless leg draped over the other knee and a quivering rubber band fas-

tened to his forked fingers, put his hand to his nose.

"Ouch!" he yelled.

Niles Gowamley reached to his hip pocket with a yelp. Leaping Leander Leverwaite, just landing on the floor, reached down to his shoe, yelped. Billy Camorra arose with a spring, straight upward from his seat, gripping his nose with one hand, then bending down and slapping at his shoe with the other.

"Who did that?" he yelled.

"Ladies and gentlemen!" said little Professor Noel Gouf, helplessly. "Ladies and gentlemen! Gentlemen! Please pay attention! Gentlemen!"

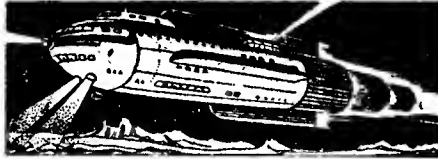
whether he was there or not. Dodging and ducking between them, he made his way to the class room door, and out.

He passed by Principal MacGlurk's office. MacGlurk was bent over inside, feeling the seat of his pants.

"You've got splinters in your chin!" the happy voice of Miss Peavy rang out.

"You're fired!" said MacGlurk. "You're fired!"

Little Professor Noel Gouf stopped in on his way out. He swung back his foot and landed it solidly and with all the emphasis of his stocky little frame upon MacGlurk's bent hind end. He had always wanted to do it, he realized. He



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Niles Gowamley was on his feet, with his fists swinging. Lanky Billy Camorra swung his arm at Leaping Leander's jaw. Leaping Leander, diving under, butted his head into Billy's stomach. The girls were standing on their seats, laughing and screaming.

"Ladies and gentlemen!" said little Professor Gouf, more helpless and almost crying. "Please pay attention! I was just on the verge of a most important thought. I almost had something. Let us for the moment imagine—"

But he had lost the thread of his thought. For an instant, only for a tiny split infinitesimal fraction of a second, he had thought that he had the answer to the fourth dimension.

They were all in an uproar, and screaming. It made no difference

wondered why he had never done it before. It almost seemed to him he had.

"You're fired!" yelled MacGlurk, as he went forward with great speed, and hit the floor again.

But somehow little Noel Gouf didn't care any more. He didn't care or worry about anything. There was a great peace in him.

He went out upon the streets, at his little pace of thirty inches to the step. He bumped into young Reverend Holmes, the new clergyman of the church which Jessie attended, on the sidewalk.

"I was just on my way to see you, Professor," said the young clergyman, falling into step with him. "I was writing my sermon, and all at once I thought of you. I thought we had a fascinating

conversation, but I couldn't think about what."

"About the fourth dimension," said Noel Gouf. "I almost thought that I had solved it, for an infinitesimal split fraction of a second."

"Perhaps we all solve it, more than once in our lives," said the young parson gravely. "In times of stress or need, when we get out of ourselves. Hunches. Intuitions. Visions. Artists' creative inspirations. Things which come to us while we may be wandering in some

fourth dimension. Only we never remember about it afterward. I might put that in my sermon. I thought—I don't know why—but I thought there might be something you would be able to tell me, something of that world. You have forgotten?"

"If I sold SI short today, and it goes down tomorrow, the fourth dimension is real," said Noel Gouf. "That is all that I can tell you."

And he went home to call up his brokers, and make sure he had.

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"No," cried Aneeya.
"Just to think of
shooting will enrage
my father."



CHILDREN OF THE GODS

By D. D. SHARP

*A Strange Secret That Remains Safely Guarded
by Two Great Scientists Casts a Shadow Over
the Love of Their Children, Aneeya and Cappi!*

HAPPINESS came into my life the night I met Aneeya. Her father, the great scientist Dean Carmody, brought her to my room and she set fire to my mind dulled with the long hours I had been working in the laboratory.

Her beauty was extraordinary, and I could find in it no single flaw, no slightest imperfection, not one of the defects inherent in other girls. She was as different as an oriental lotus

set against a jewelled altar. When, quite by accident, her soft hand brushed against mine my blood warmed and pounded strangely.

She was smiling as her father presented us, but he seemed strange to me even then, a gargoyle grimacing at life. Not her sort at all. She was as alluring as she was beautiful, exquisite and something more, something not to be possessed, but worshipped, a slender flame in a quiet cathedral.

Of his scientific brilliance I knew. In his cold, disturbing way he resembled a hard, white light, incandescent and massively stable; rotating within his own plane, bespeaking by the set of his face that he was master of his particular world. He was the genius of the powerful cyclotron buried deep beneath University campus.

I remember marveling at his matter-of-fact manner as he introduced us, and wondered what could be so deadening in advancing years that he, too, was not stirred by her beauty; why the rotation of his methodical thoughts had never fallen into simple parental pride at the loveliness he had fathered.

I stood dumbly, trying to compose adequate remarks. His monologued observations on his findings in the new science of electronics made it obvious how far above me he was intellectually.

Aneeya's eyes were large, intense, all the time he was speaking. I felt that they were demanding something of me I could not understand. Her father talked of lipins, proteins, and a process he was perfecting to produce synthetic digestions.

He was a peculiarly impressive-looking man, features angular and aggressive, face long, hair frostwhite and fine as rainwashed web covering a shiny scalp which bulged widely to accommodate the massive brain lobes within his cranial box. I had known him at a distance long before that night. He and my father were colleagues in many physical researches, but I had never thought of him in relation with anyone else, far less as the father of a beautiful girl.

He was of all men least acceptable to me as a future father-in-law, for I loved Aneeya even that night with a queer, unexplainable insistence which replaced all other desires and ambitions. I loved her as I feared him and his extraordinary power of knowledge that I knew was far and beyond the ordinary allotment of other brilliant men. I reacted toward him as I did toward my own father, my dominant emotion a weird, intangible sense of helplessness against superior will and

devising. Each time his eyes lifted slowly to search my face I could feel my pounding blood chill. Deep in those black pupils was a force, a purpose, a design to be imagined but hardly understood.

I SOON learned he was like my father in other ways. Both regarded science, not the formulated laws of a creative God, but creative genius itself. To them spirit was no more than an emanation of chemical process; love a magnetic affinity between physical masses as exact in its influence as the ratio of pi, with romance as mathematically predictable as gravity when given the distance and ratio of masses.

He watched me intently while I tried to keep my attention averted from the girl beside him. And on the things he was saying. Finally he touched her lightly upon the shoulder and told her to leave us. She obeyed, granting me one mute, uninterpretable appeal as she said good-night.

After she was gone I sat reviewing the beloved memories of her every word, her quaintly fetching mannerisms, glad her father had now turned his attentions to my instructor. My father came in and glanced quickly and inquisitively into my face, exactly as though I were a culture in a test tube. After a moment he turned from me and motioned to the Dean. Together they went into my father's private laboratory.

Had I been less lost in reverie my curiosity would have been keenly aroused by their conference. I could hear their voices as they rose again and again as with extraordinary excitement. Bits of their conversation were of the old, old subject, one they were forever discussing.

It was not *what* they were talking about that astonished me but the unusual excitement in their voices. They were methodical and unemotional men. Why were they so plainly exulted over the deduction that there was cytoplasmic reaction of inorganic structures when highly bombarded by helium atoms from the cyclotron chamber?

My father had been obsessed by

ideas of accomplishing some sort of alchemy. Until this night Dean Carmody had been critical of father's "Bi-polar Conceptions of Inert Structures." Electricity is life, he had agreed, cellular growth merely inherent arrangements and densities of electrical resistance affording certain material sensations.

Now at last Dean Carmody was enthusiastic. Well, thought I, let them rave. They are old men forever beyond the sweet bonds of romance. My emotions that night were entirely untuned to their eagerness about the reactions of slimy, granular semi-fluids in culture tubes. I did not care to be reminded that such stuff was the foundation of all living tissues, even the flesh of the bewildering, bewitching Aneeya.

WHEN Dean Carmody had gone father came into the little room I used as a bedroom. He stood framed in the narrow door, looking down at me with a strange and alarming focus of his cold gray eyes. It was as though he were seeing me as my own flesh might become were it bound to the bombardments of Dean Carmody's machine.

"Please," I cried out, for his scrutiny drove away romantic thoughts. "Can't you act like a normal father? Why are all your thoughts bound up in research, forever and ever? You have interest in nothing else. It's driving me wild!"

"That girl, Aneeya," he said, ominously disregarding my outburst. "I can see you are falling in love with her."

With a queerly penetrating glance that seemed to reach my very soul he went back into his private lab where I had never been allowed to go.

I sat a long time on this stool, wondering what he could mean. Was he in love with her, too?

After that life moved in a hazy routine. My one pleasure was to sit in the room where she had been, remembering the lustrous magnetism in her gray-green eyes, the way they blazed when she was excited, their tender softness when she was moody or deeply in earnest.

I roamed about the campus hoping to see her again. I made guarded inquiries about her to those who knew Dean Carmody. Their answers but heightened my anxiety and bewilderment. None of them knew he had a daughter.

After these attempts my desire to find her became overpowering, yet I dared not invade the subterranean chambers which housed the great and deadly cyclotron where her father worked. It had too many guards, and there was something in his face which warned me it might go ill with her if he knew my interest. My mood turned to despair, to futile longing and hopeless search.

Luck had been against me since my unhappy attack of amnesia not long before. Since it nothing my father maneuvered had turned out well for me. I became convinced he was the overseeing manipulator of my failures to contact Aneeya once more. Despair overcame me.

I gave up hope and then, without any warning she came to me. I was alone in my room one evening when there was a knock on my door, insistent and panicky.

"Come in," I shouted casually, unaware of its portent. There she was, large eyes burning like kindling lamps on a windy night. Softly she shut the door and lifted her eyes to mine. Her impersonal stare dared me to wonder at her coming to my bedroom.

"I could think only of you," she gasped, her little white hands pressed tightly to her cheeks. She kept her back against the door as though to shut out immediate pursuit. "That monster! That mind with no soul! That man, my father!"

STUPID with bewilderment, I could think of no word to soothe her. Awkwardly I dragged forward a chair, but she ignored it.

"I could think of only you," she gasped again. "You've got to help me. You've got to."

I stood up at last and went close to her. I caught her small hands into mine and drew them from her face. They were cold and moist and tense. I was on fire with the nearness of her.

I do not think she guessed how tightly she clung to my fingers.

She came into my arms and I shut away with my body whatever menace lurked beyond the door.

"I'll kill him if he harms you," I growled. With one arm I reached over to lift a snub-nosed gun from my table.

She suppressed a scream.

"No!" she protested, pushing it from her sight. "You would only anger him to think of it. He knows everything—my thoughts, your thoughts. We are both helpless against him."

"Please," I begged her. "We must be sensible."

She sat down on the chair I offered, perching near the edge of it as though to spring away at the slightest sound.

"He's no god, he's just a man," I reasoned. "His power is limited to the power of his machine. Just stay out of that underground vault where it is. Those rays can't reach beyond the leaded chambers. Stay above ground and there's no electronic influence to frighten you."

She raised her face to me. There was no smile at her lips, no color in her cheeks.

"I wish I could be brave as you," she said simply. She put her hands into mine like a little child who desires to be led through the darkness.

That began our make believe—make believe that we could escape the influence of Carmody and my father. That began our love, intense and for the moment, free of all other thought but that we were together. Her palms framed my face, her lips half parted as the terror died in her eyes.

"Aneeya," I whispered, "why have you avoided me?"

I kissed her, and as though by prearrangement to catch us in our rapture there seeped into the room that which I had learned to dread. She too, recognized it. I could tell by the way the softness fled from her lips and her yielding fingers clenched mine.

IT was not a voice nor a shadow that alarmed us. Far more possessing and irrefutable, it was the scent of chemicals boiling silently beyond the door of the room my father had

never allowed me to enter.

"We must get away from this place," I said as I tried to control my own fear. I looked into her widening eyes. "We must run away. The world is not all like this!"

"I can't," she sobbed. "I can't leave until I know who I am. He's not my father, I'm sure. He can't be. I can remember nothing before I woke up down there in his laboratory a few weeks ago. My mind was blank with amnesia. He was the cause of it!"

"The low beast," I hissed, hate of him consuming me. I slid the gun into my pocket. I was conscious of the odor again, that acrid, penetrating bitterness. It overpowered me like the passing of a mesmeric hand, warning of the power of the forces we opposed.

"We've got to get away," I finished confusedly.

She smiled at that, her lips twisting at the corners as not quite obedient to her will.

"There is that which is more terrible than loss of memory, Cappi," she whispered, using my name so intimately it all but blotted out that awesome chemical smell which so benumbed the subconscious.

"We'll go away," I repeated. "What do we care about the past?"

"No, I didn't mean that," she said, "there are terrible things I must face here because I must know who I am. It will sound crazy unless you know him as I know him, know what he does down there with that ghastly cyclotron. It's too crazy to speak, but I've got to tell you. I've got to.

"I'm afraid he's trying to turn me into stone, or metal. That he'll set me out in the patio for everyone to see and no one will believe what he has done even if he tells them."

"Stop!" I broke in. "That's what he's trying to do, make you afraid. Get away from that sulphuric den! Forget he has a cyclotron! The only way you'll ever be in bronze would be to model for a masterpiece by Suzzanni, to the artist's everlasting fame and fortune. Your father and mine make me crazy. Now let's go out and forget them for a while."

"I know what I know," she insisted,

her big eyes still fixed on mine. "You'd know it too, if you had watched him bombard a penny weight of aluminum with helium particles until it changed from atomic 13 to 15, nothing more nor less than phosphorous. It's alchemy, and he its wizard. He can do the same to my flesh. He can, I know he can.

"Once he took sodium, added a neutron of heavy hydrogen and there it was, not sodium but magnesium. He can do anything he wants to physical structures. He changes proteins into protoplasm, then to cytoplasm, and nourishes it until it becomes moving, living protozoa. Flesh into bronze isn't beyond him. It isn't Capi!"

Her tones ran chills into my blood.

"Stop it!" I shouted. "I'm going to take you out."

WE CROSSED the campus to a café to crowd under a polished table that almost filled our little varnished booth. Together and alone the monstrous, unreal men who tendered such unnatural parentage seemed to live in another world. I knew there that she loved me, not as a refuge, not as defender against intangible horror, but through a power of affinity, one man for one woman, unpredictable and mystic despite all scientific claims to formulate it.

We talked and she forgot fear, remembering only that we were together. I persuaded her there was no danger confronting her, sincerely believing she would be safe. After all, Dean Carmody was her father and there was only imagination and a subconscious perception to raise alarm.

I should have married her then, but she would not allow it. She wanted me to continue my education and I was wholly dependent financially upon the generosity of my father.

We had another and more pressing reason for waiting. We wanted to lift the veil of amnesia hanging over our lives and discover who indeed we were. We both felt the overpowering need to find out if our common plight was an extraordinary coincidence, or whether we were the victims of a diabolical conspiracy contrived by our fathers, otherwise two highly re-

spected men. Our only hope of finding out what lay behind the loss of memory was in continuing our lives as they were.

Long after she had gone back to her father I stood picturing her in his laboratory deep below the heavy earth. I wondered many things I did not have the power to put into thought. After a while I left, there was nothing I could do.

Carmody paid another visit to my room that night. He sat there on the bench stool and I on my bed observing him, trying to detect the mysteries masked so ingeniously by his long, genteel face. It told me nothing.

He talked little, at first, though he took every opportunity to scrutinize me. I wondered why he was allotting me so much of his valuable time. Once he spoke of Fiske and the relative nature of human knowledge.

"Each of our senses tells the mind a different story," he explained with a sardonic leer. From his pocket he took a cube that looked like rock salt.

"Touch says this piece of inorganic matter is hard. Taste says it is bitter. Sight, a capricious and versatile witness, defines it as white, opaque, and cubical. Smell testifies there is nothing here at all! A sixth sense would give new and unsuspected evidence. What is the truth of this mysterious phenomena? What is this thing in itself?"

Not only in this did he try to confuse me. He set about to prove that matter was cohesive, it was not cohesive, that monotheism and polytheism are equally logical and untenable; that the possible was impossible and the impossible possible.

As he talked I became dazed and unable to define the real from the unreal. I could feel sure of only one thing—my conviction that he was trying to hypnotize me to the point where I would believe anything he might say.

HE SPOKE of the cyclotron, claiming for it the power to contrive even greater paradoxes of testimony. Electronic ions were the true god, he assured me with great solemnity. They were the thing in itself, the absolute, the creative. His

voice grew tense, hoarse, excitedly uncontrolled as he leaned forward as to confide in me.

"Certain bombardments from the cyclotron window can alter atomic structures, change copper into an element that is as pliant as human flesh. In this state it absorbs nourishment. It screams like a child at the lash of a whip. If I hit it and come near, it recoils with whimpering vibrations that run like ripples across its metallic face. You can make your own conclusions as to whether or not it has any of our five senses, or a sixth sense, or is sentient like living tissue. Sometimes I am convinced it understands and fears me. It seems to regard me as an unnatural master and wonders what I have in my bag of tricks it has not yet guessed."

"Flesh can feel," I said. "Flesh is ash, phosphorous, nitrogen. They do not feel nor reason, until arranged in certain proportions within the cranial box. Why not copper, then?"

"That is what I must know," he iterated. "I'd bombard my own flesh until it became frozen as steel, if I were able to record the process."

I wondered then if he had not discovered the fourth dimension where unpredictable miracles exist. No wonder Aneeya was alarmed. She had seen him in action surrounded by the massive towers of magnetic iron and the squat chamber that impelled such sinister velocities. Her fear-swept face came so vividly to my imagination it seemed as though she had entered the room.

Dean Carmody's bloodshot eyeballs close to mine brought me back to reality. Bulging from slowly lifting lids they were as unhuman and pallid as the rest of the big, egg-shaped cranium so abnormally massive under its scanty web of hair.

"Aneeya," I demanded with boldness born of fear. "Why did you not bring her tonight?"

The pallid lids lowered slightly as his greenish pupils bored me like searchlights following a fugitive in darkness.

"What do you think of her?" he asked. "There is affinity between you, isn't there, an irresistible tug like that

of magnetite upon iron?"

He was crafty. He thought to rip wide open my thoughts, my anxieties. But I could be as smart as he. I avoided his question, and quickly swung the conversation back to Fiske and the absurdity of cohesion.

For a long time I did not see Aneeya, nor did her father return to my room. But I saw him many times walking across the campus late in the evening, his bare head silhouetted against the night sky. Was crime upon his thoughts as he passed his colleagues without nod or recognition?

ONE night I had dreams so real, so harrowing, that I got out of bed and took the bus to Carmody's suburban estate. The moon was high and round, casting shadows beneath the sidewalk elms.

When the bus had gone clanging out of sight I peeped over the enclosing adobe walls. I looked with fear, half expecting to discover within the patio a fountain spraying white water upon a copper nymph, youthful, slender, and poised with dainty grace.

There was no statue in the garden. There was not even the fountain I had seen in my dreams. Under the white, cloudless moon I saw only rock-ribbed little pools where Carmody bred queer, jelly-like masses of stuff which was neither plant nor flesh.

I called, my voice running hollowly across the stillness of the night. No one answered. I could see my trip was in vain, but there beside the moonlit adobe wall I renewed my resolve to find her even if I had to go down into the cyclotron vault beneath University Hill.

Reluctantly I left the silent house. It lay behind me like a labyrinth of adobe walls across the distant landscape as I started to walk off my feverish fears rather than take the bus back.

It was broad daylight when I reached my father's laboratory. I found Carmody and Aneeya with him. The brief, exhausting relief I felt on seeing her helped to heighten my suddenly renewed foreboding. Almost immediately I was aware of some

great change. She was not the same.

Every suggestion of feeling or emotion was gone from her face. She moved as by mechanical obedience to her mind rather than her will. She looked not at me, nor at Carmody, but far across the campus at some fixed point at the rim of the afternoon sky. That stoical composure upset me even more than had her hysteria. There

will allow nothing to stop me. Knowledge is my loyalty. If Germany wants my formula of ionized transmutations all I demand in return is Franzhaffen's disclosure of neutronic transudation through simulation of living processes."

"I won't allow it," shouted my father. "Transmutation would give the Nazis everything—food, metals,



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was not a doubt she had been schooled for this visit, probably coached hour by hour to betray none of her own concern.

"Carmody," my father bellowed with tones strangely rebellious, "I won't go along with you! Your determination is traitorous. Beyond the bounds of the search for truth! Wait until we win the war."

"Impossible," Carmody snarled, "I

explosives! This is more than the advancement of knowledge. It is treason. It would result in the downfall of free initiative, free science, Carmody. It's the act of a madman!"

Carmody made no reply. His features set in even a more unyielding expression.

FATHER lifted a phone from its cradle, dialed a number. He asked

for a man, then put a hand over the mouthpiece.

"Give me your word you'll not do it, Carmody. It will ruin us both if I call the police."

"You can't stop me," Carmody answered coldly. "Nothing can. I shall send Aneeya as I planned. She can outwit them, you know that. Put down that phone."

My father took his hand from the mouthpiece.

"Send a squad car," he demanded.

Carmody turned to Aneeya.

"Go," he ordered. "The plane will take you to Franzhafen. Receive the divulsion and verify there are no tricks. When you are sure everything is in order give him this answer. If there is trouble stroke the tube with your fingers. Fire will destroy the manuscript. Go!"

"Please, Aneeya, wait!" I called loudly over father's shouting into the phone. "You can't know what this means!"

She did not seem to hear me. I wondered if he had deafened her. He was capable of it. I moved to grasp her, but she was away like a shadow running up a mountain. Before she reached the street police sirens were wailing in the avenue. She did not pause. Whether or not she heard them I couldn't tell. She ran faster than any girl I had ever known.

I reached the street and saw the cars would never overtake her. A plane, propellers whirring bright in the sun, was waiting on a runway of the training school. I ran calling her name, but the wail of the siren drowned my voice.

She reached the plane just as my father came out on a balcony of the patio. He knelt and raised the Garand rifle he was carrying to the focus of one eye. As I turned, he fired a burst of several explosions.

When I saw her again the police car was rushing down the runway and the plane was taking off, but Aneeya, my beautiful becursed Aneeya, was lying upon the cement, her dark hair spread fanwise, her pink dress fluttering in the backwash of air behind the fleeing ship.

I knew she was dead. She was too

still, too frightfully still, and her head was doubled down at a queer angle. Her small hands still clutched Carmody's papers.

The squad car skidded to a stop. The men in it seemed stunned at the sight of such loveliness lying broken before them. They removed their hats and stood about in groups of twos and threes. I reached her and stooped to lift her in my arms. Her hair blew against my face, softly caressing it, and as I held her lifeless body in my arms my heart was aching at the thought of life's emptiness without her.

They allowed me to hold her until Carmody and my father came. Carmody's face was twisted in a vicious sneer as he retrieved the papers that had been her undoing. He turned to me.

"Look, my boy," he said, his voice strange. "Look at her wounds. There is no blood from them. Take your arms away and see what you are hugging. Her flesh is torn, and there should be blood but there is none. Look for yourself."

STARTLED, I obeyed his command. It was true! Her flesh was torn, but no blood had come from her wounds, not a drop.

My sudden joy was quenched in a weird sensation. I wondered if I could be awake, if I could trust the verdict of my eyes.

The bullets had torn open her lovely flesh, as they might have opened the breast of a shop window mannikin. As I looked more closely I could see there was not only no blood, there was no underlying foundation of bleeding tissues—only a mesh of copper wires bright and tangled where they had been buried in gummy yellow plastic.

"Suzzanni modeled her himself," Carmody said with a distressed groan, "and I made her organs. They're simple as those of a Model T."

He stooped and ran his long fingers along her body.

I drew her close again, turning away my eyes from the horrible wound, overcome with bereavement and unbelief. After a moment I raised my eyes.

"Let her alone," I defied them and pulled out my gun.

As I spoke Aneeya sighed and moved her head. She breathed again, opening her lovely eyes to stare at me in puzzled astonishment.

"Cappie," she whispered close against my ear, "what has happened?"

She grew warm against my body, but the things Carmody had said had momentarily shocked the foundations of desire, the law of flesh to flesh. Such ridicule was in her face, such open derision that my arms loosened their hold.

"She isn't real," bellowed my father. "I helped construct her myself. Now you know the truth."

"Me?" She stared at the two men as though they were madmen, then her eyes came back to mine. "Me not real? They're mad," she whispered, her fingers clutching my unresponding arms. "Of course I'm real. How else could we love each other so? That proves it, doesn't it."

To my everlasting shame I drew back from her embrace, as though caught hugging a dictaphone or the sorority radio, answering its love songs with kisses. Too stunned to resist, I let them take her.

Back in my room reason returned. Whatever her flesh, I loved her; nothing could change that. Now that the shock of discovery was receding I realized I had acted the fool—the toy of the two men who sought to rule us.

The memory of her tragic face as they carried her away rose to haunt me.

Where had they taken her, what would they do with her, above all, what would she think of me for deserting her at such a time? If the revelation had been a blow to me, how much greater must it have been for her?

A KNOCK on the door and my father came into the room. He placed a hand upon my shoulder. It was the first time he had ever shown any feeling toward me, the first time I had ever felt any feeling of kinship toward him.

"You should have stayed with her," he said as though reading my mind. "I am sorry now I spoke so in haste. She is real, in a way. Life is electricity whatever its form or affinities, whether its impulse is generated in flesh or in copper cells. It is rather late to be doing this, my son, but I feel I must make another disclosure."

He lifted his hand and I saw it held a brightly gleaming scalpel. Before I had grasped his purpose he had laid a deep gash across my wrist. Then he turned and strode quickly from the room.

I looked down at my arm. The cut was deep, but from it spurted no blood. I could see no foundation of living tissue beneath the skin, only a mesh of copper wires buried in gummy yellow plastic.

With a great surge of joy I started for the door. She couldn't be far, but wherever she was I would find her. I'd take her in my arms and tell her how we two, out of all the world, had been made to belong to each other.





Surrounded by wobblies, Gleason had unmistakably stopped breathing

WOBBLIES IN THE MOON

A Complete Novelet

By

**FRANK BELKNAP
LONG**



John Carstairs

On the Trail of a Lunar Crime, John Carstairs, the Botanical Detective, Proves That a Moonman's Meat May Be an Earthman's Poison!

CHAPTER I

Cry in the Lunar Night

"**J**OHN, John, wake up!" Vera Dorn screamed, pounding on the door of Carstairs' sleeping turret. "The wobblies have broken loose!"

The Curator of the Interplanetary Botanical Gardens stirred, yawned, turned over and buried his head in the bedclothes. "Ahhhh—" he sighed.

"John, let me in! Open the door! The wobblies—"

Carstairs leapt up in consternation, throwing back the bedclothes so violently that they wrapped themselves around his long legs and sent him sprawling. Shivering, he groaned, rolled over and struggled to a sitting position.

"Take it easy, Vera," he muttered, knuckling sleep from his eyelids. "The blasted things aren't flesh-eaters."

"Oh, but, darling, if we should lose them! Our rarest specimens, walking around loose! Can you blame me for getting excited?"

"No, I suppose not," Carstairs grunted. "Open the door yourself. It isn't locked."

The door opened a crack, and the pale

face of John Carstairs' attractive, copper-haired secretary came into view.

Wrapping the bedclothes tightly around his rangy bulk, Carstairs arose and crossed to the window. When he pulled up the shade a glint of Earthlight from the Lunar Apennines grazed his pupils, dazzling him. He blinked and stared out at the towering peaks which he had been contemplating with awe for several days now.

Vera was sitting on the edge of the bed when he turned, her hands clasped around her knees.

"It will be a shock to Gleason," she said. "One of them came into my room and climbed out the window. I encountered another in the corridor. When I tried to catch it, it hurled a nettle at me. It's still here, in my shoulder."

She turned and bared a portion of her right shoulder. Half-buried in her flesh was a huge, downy nettle. It was strawberry-colored, and five or six inches in diameter. It brought a shiver to Carstairs' spine.

"We'll get it out," he said. "They are loathsome creatures, but worth their weight in platinum."

"You don't seem very upset about losing them," Vera retorted. "They're prob-

ably streaking back to the mountains by now."

Carstairs shrugged. "We're Gleason's guests, aren't we? We're spending the week-end with him. The right kind of host doesn't let his guests down. If I'm any judge of character, he won't rest until he's tracked down some more specimens for us."

VERA DORN'S freckled face crimsoned with indignation. "John Carstairs, you're the most cynical, ungrateful person I've ever known. Gleason is an extremely wealthy man. He doesn't *have* to collect specimens for you."

"He's a good egg," Carstairs grunted. "But vain. Endowing our lunar expeditions and collecting for us puffs him out like a kid's toy balloon. He likes to pose as a scientific big shot. If I had a glassite-walled palace on the moon, decked out with seven black plastic bathrooms, I'd forget about science with a capital S. I'd just be myself."

"What makes you think a wealthy man can't be a humble soldier in the army of science?" Vera flared.

"Heck, we're not fighting anything," Carstairs snorted. "Am I a soldier? All I do is collect unhealthy looking plants, and hold down a dull job on Earth. Utterly nightmarish plants, from 'glowing Venus to Neptune's chill domain'—to quote from a book of bum poems I once read."

"John, what are you driving at?"

"Well, do our expeditions save human lives? Is our work really important? Vera, I'm just a tired old man killing a dull week-end with an elderly playboy in his pleasure palace on the moon. If he hadn't sent me a space-o-gram telling me he had an extraordinary new specimen, and would I call for it, I'd be killing a duller one on Earth. Oh, heck."

"You got up on the wrong side of the bed, all right," Vera sneered. "Old man, indeed! You're a few hours past twenty-eight, on account of this is your birthday. But you're not so old, and all you need to pep you up is a nice, juicy, murder."

She wrinkled her nose. "You're just

disgruntled because you can't help the New York police department crack down on the criminal element. You're as sore as the dickens because you can't neglect your research work and go rushing around like a turkey with its neck stretched out for the chopping block."

Carstairs gnawed at his underlip and glared at the attractive university graduate who had wangled a job for herself at the Interplanetary Botanical Gardens solely on her nerve. Bitterly Carstairs recalled that she had walked into his office on a rainy Sunday, pretending to be a research botanist of established reputation. Actually she had merely majored in botany at college, and had the softest eyes.

"You're a botanist eight days out of seven," he flung at her. "But right now I'm fed up. Fed up, you hear?"

"But, John—"

"All right, wobblies are rare, wobblies are valuable. And Gleason is a resourceful collector. We didn't even know wobblies existed on Luna until he hoisted three adult specimens out of a mountain crevice, and sent me that space-o-gram. I was elated at first, but it's worn off. I'm bored, peeved, and if we've lost them, I just don't give a Neptunian peso."

Vera Dorn's lips tightened ominously. "Botanical Detective John Carstairs is going to eat crow," she said. "He's going to apologize to the most gracious host a man ever had for putting those valuable specimens in a fragile glass herbarium. And if you think he'll go out, and collect some more wobblies for you—"

She stiffened in sudden horror. A piercing, long-drawn scream had reverberated across the glassite-walled sleeping turret, congealing her vocal chords, and turning Carstairs' blood to ice. It was followed by a silence so cloying that it seemed to muffle the tick of Carstairs' Greenwich-synchronized wrist watch.

With a startled oath, he snatched an oxygen mask from an overnight bag, clamped it on his face and rushed to the window. Throwing the casement wide, he strode out on the railed observation

platform which half-encircled Gleason's towerlike dwelling.

BENEATH him stretched the foothills of the mightiest mountain range on Luna. Coruscating in the light of brittle stars, they arose precipitously from an ash-strewn plain, and though the smallest of them would have dwarfed a full-fledged mountain on Earth they seemed of pygmy dimensions when his gaze swept upward over the Gargantuan peaks beyond.

A strangled sound came from behind him. He swung about, his lips tightening. Vera was standing just outside the window.

"John," she choked. "That scream came from downstairs. You can't see anything from here. The wobblies wouldn't be visible in this glare."

The scream came again. It was audible now on the platform, a hideous, tormented wailing which seemed to drift up from below.

"It's coming from Gleason's sleeping turret," Carstairs said. "He sleeps with his oxygen mask on and his windows flung wide. I just wanted to make sure."

"Then why are we standing here?" Vera choked. "Oh, he's dying!"

"Get back inside," Carstairs rapped. "You ought to have more sense than to come out here without a mask."

"John, are the wobblies attacking him?"

"It couldn't be the wobblies. They're not carnivorous, and their nettles merely irritate the skin a little. Now get back, before your lungs buckle into folds."

Vera obeyed. She didn't stay in Carstairs' turret, but ran breathlessly through the door, and down a cold-lighted corridor to a spiraling flight of black plastic stairs. Down them she raced, oblivious to the torment in her lungs. Carstairs descended in slower strides, but the length of his legs kept him constantly at her side. With almost simultaneous movements he had thrown off the blankets, pushed the oxygen mask back over his forehead and wrapped a dressing gown around his rangy bulk.

"Take it easy, Vera," he cautioned.

"If you drop dead, you'll be sorry later on."

On dim walls on both sides of the stairway loomed imaginative paintings. Segrelles' *Mountains of the Moon* and Degrasse's *Seas of Saturn*. The tower was richly furnished, dark and awesome from its observatory roof to the deep cellars underground where Gleason's choicest wines were stored.

In one aspect of his personality Gleason was an epicure, almost a sybarite. A scientific Gleason had welcomed the director of the Interplanetary Gardens to the Lunar Apennines, but Carstairs knew that there were other, more riotous Gleasons. There was a Gleason who devoutly admired chorus girls from the Twenty-first Century follies, a Gleason who went on periodic binges, and a Gleason who liked to gamble for high stakes over stacked chips at midnight.

Gleason's sleeping turret was at the end of a long, winding corridor on the third floor of the tower. Vera got to the door a split second ahead of Carstairs. Although it did not seem to be locked, the barrier creaked noisily and resisted her frantic tuggings.

"John, you'd better put your shoulders to it," she whispered hoarsely. "It seems to be stuck. Oh, John, I'm frightened."

Carstairs needed no urging. Bracing himself, he hurled his massive shoulders against the portal. There was a grinding crunch, and something clattered to the floor inside the turret. His face purpling, Carstairs pushed the door vigorously inward.

Vera pressed in after him, so closely that her breath fanned his neck. His shoulders half-blocked her view, but she could see chairs, a dresser and the upper portion of Gleason's bed. She could see Gleason sitting upright in his bed.

Her vision was superior to Carstairs', and wider in scope. She could see obscurely in the dark, and sharply in a dim light. The turret was bathed in a pale, sickly radiance.

A cry rasping in her throat, she reeled forward and gripped Carstairs' shoulders with both hands.

CHAPTER II*Flight and Pursuit*

IN THE center of the turret stood three huge wobblies. Their tendrils were weaving about in the gloom, and they had grouped themselves in a semi-circle around the rigidly distorted figure of Gleason. Like plant ghosts they hovered above him, their body-roots glowing with a faint, spectral radiance.

Unutterably terrifying they seemed, but what drove the blood in torrents from Vera's heart was Gleason's bulging eyes, and gruesomely sardonical grin.

"John, he's dead," she husked, her voice like a whisper from the tomb.

A convulsive contraction twisted Carstairs' rough-hewn face. Swiftly he strode to the bed, ignoring the nettles which the tallest of the three wobblies instantly flung at him. One grazed his right cheek, another embedded itself in his shoulder.

He winced, and clawed at his flesh with his fingers, as though the downy "strawberry" had been dipped in acid, and was corroding his skin. Actually the gesture was instinctive, and on a par with nail-gnawing in a crisis.

Although Carstairs was no stranger to post-mortem appearances, his examination of the still figure was brief. Nothing can be done for a corpse, and Gleason had unmistakably stopped breathing. The risus sardonicus which distorted his features seemed to relax a little as Carstairs drew the sheets up over him.

Shuddering, he turned from the bed. Vera was staring at the wobblies with terror stenciled on every lineament of her twitching face.

"John, did these ghastly things attack him?" she husked.

Carstairs shook his head. "How many times must I tell you that wobblies are not flesh-eaters," he said chokily. "They hurl nettles to protect themselves from their natural enemies, but otherwise they're harmless. When Gleason observed them on the mountains he took

copious notes. They're freakish, but harmless perambulating plants."

The appearance and behavior of the wobblies seemed to belie Carstairs' words. They now hurled themselves across the dead man's bed, plucking with quivering tendrils at the sheets which covered him. Hideously manlike they seemed, with their gray and eroded-looking body-roots writhing against the sheets.

Tall they were, at least seven feet in height, and proportionately broad of shoulder. The fact that they had three tendrils on each side of their torsolike bodies in lieu of arms, and that they moved, when erect, on stumpy legs which caused them to wobble grotesquely did not detract from the illusion of humanness which their appearance conveyed.

Staggeringly weird they seemed when they used their nettles, for the flabby sacks in which the prickly "strawberries" grew resembled the belly pouches of kangaroos, and the nettles had to be plucked out, and hurled. Jocularly, Gleason had called Carstairs' attention to the fact that a wobbly with its tendril arm extended, and its body twisted sharply in the act of hurling a nettle looked not unlike a pitcher in the old Earth game called baseball.

But now Gleason was no longer capable of jocularity, and Carstairs' expression was as grim as death. He was sniffing at the air and staring at his hands, as though bewildered by his ability to flex his fingers when his spine was a column of ice, his tongue a swollen mass of jelly.

"John, what is it?" Vera whispered hoarsely. "I don't smell anything."

"It would be better if you did," Carstairs husked. "Vera, this is devilish. Something utterly diabolic has occurred here. Yet there isn't a mark on him."

"What, John? What is it?"

"It—it defies reason. There are unmistakable evidences of foul play. Brownish mucous membranes, dilated pupils."

He returned to the bed and bent over the still figure lying there. His nostrils

quivered, flared.

"The characteristic odor," he grunted. "But only his body exhales it."

"Uncle always was eccentric," said a cynical voice from the doorway. "In death as in life—peculiar, different."

Carstairs turned about on his heels, his jaw hardening.

The youth standing in the doorway had a sickly leer on his face. He was wearing black silk pajamas and he had thrown a monogrammed bath towel about his shoulders and knotted it foppishly in front.

CARSTAIRS had met Gleason's weak-chinned, dissolute nephew several times on Earth, and had hardly been able to stomach the youth's exaggerated mannerisms, and air of knowing he would someday inherit his uncle's wealth.

Henry Gleason Showalter was unmistakably intoxicated, but his sneering manner did not seem to emanate from the alcohol in his brain. His gaze was steady enough, and his voice had a quality of smirking contempt for the living and the dead which chilled Vera to the depth of her being.

Before she could draw away from him he patted her arm. "You're right in your element, aren't you?" he sneered. "Helping him with his police work."

Carstairs saw red. He advanced upon the youth in three long strides, grabbed him by the shoulders and shook him until his jaw sagged.

"You cold-blooded little rotter," he grated. "Your uncle is dead. Doesn't that mean anything to you?"

"In his present condition, how could it mean anything?" asked a silky voice from the doorway. "He's been drinking steadily for hours."

Mona Clayton looked hard, cynical. She looked infinitely more cynical than Gleason's nephew, but she had more strength of character than the weak-chinned youth, and knew when and how to keep her thoughts to herself. The fact that she was that youth's fiancée had amazed Carstairs at first, but after conversing with her in Gleason's pres-

ence he had decided she was nobody's fool. She was marrying young Showalter for the money he'd eventually inherit. A gold-digger, if ever there was one. A hard, calculating little minx.

Behind her in shadows hovered Lee Chan, Gleason's Chinese butler, his once yellow face drained of all color.

"The master is dead," he wailed, wringing his hands. "He was the kindest man I ever knew. The very kindest man."

Vera crossed to Carstairs' side and tugged urgently at his arm. "John, control yourself!" she pleaded thickly. "Set him down."

"Would you rather I *squeezed* the rottenness out of him?" Carstairs grunted. "Just say the word."

There was a sudden, deafening roar, and an energy pellet thudded into the wall behind Carstairs' head, shaking the entire turret. Mona Clayton screamed, and Carstairs leaped backward with a startled oath, carrying the youth with him.

Two more blasts came in staccato sequence. The window flamed orange, and a thin ribbon of smoke drifted into the turret from the darkness beyond.

Carstairs knew that a Gierson automatic pistol held five energy pellets. He also knew that Interplanetary Patrol regulations prohibited fancy weapons on the moon. The chances seemed to favor a Gierson, and a nearly exhausted clip.

Carstairs hurled Showalter from him with a snort of disgust. Three furious strides carried him to the window; a raised right foot and a leverage jounce from his left heel lifted him over the sill into the cold lunar night.

From the ventilator turbines at the base of the tower thin currents of scorching air ascended, to be instantly moderated by the cold of space. His shoulders etched in Earthlight, a cloaked figure was running along the observation platform toward what appeared to be a mistily weaving spiral of light.

Pulling his oxygen mask down over his face, Carstairs pounded after him,

his breath congealing on the frosty air. His energy carried him on with incredible speed. The moon's light gravity put wings on his heels, and lengthened his strides till his dressing gown swirled up about his shoulders, and streamed out behind him like a wind-lashed cloak.

His lips were contorted with savage mutterings when the spiral resolved itself into the stern light of a small vacuum plane. The machine was poised at the edge of the platform, its forward struts gleaming in the Earthlight, its magnetic traction vanes humming.

EVEN as Carstairs' gaze swept over it, the fleeing figure heaved itself into the pilot's seat and bent sharply forward. There was a sudden, vibrant roar, and the plane zigzagged along the edge of the platform, and took off so abruptly that Carstairs nearly lost his grip on the strut toward which he had literally dived.

Clinging with both hands, he let his long legs dangle, and cursed himself for a madman. The plane rose sharply and then swooped, descending toward the foothills below in a graceful, hawklike glide.

Carstairs looked down, his spine congealing. Sheer height, when viewed from a solid structure, is seldom terrifying, but it is quite otherwise when the observer is clinging to the thrumming struts of a circling plane.

Beneath him yawned a dizzying gulf of emptiness, walled with darkness and substructured with peaks which looked like stalactites in reverse, each one of which seemed capable of impaling him, and rotating him in squirming agony till the end of time.

"Maybe it wasn't such a good idea," he muttered between clenched teeth, tightening his grip on the strut.

Down the plane swooped and down. It had ceased to descend gracefully, had begun to gyrate. Like a wounded bladder-bird, it swooped to right and left and quivered from beak to stern.

Carstairs' nerves were shrieking when it settled to the ground in a deep gulch between two peaks and glided to a halt

with a barely perceptible jolt. White-lipped, he dropped to the ground, and tore around the front of the plane to the pilot compartment.

It was a reckless thing to do, for the emerging pilot blasted from the hip the instant he discovered that he had a passenger. He stood half-out of the pilot seat, grasping the strut with one hand, and emptying his automatic in Carstairs' direction.

Two blasts echoed between hollow peaks as Carstairs clambered over a heated vane, and gripped the wrist of his assailant. "You're a bum pilot, Bowles," he panted. "You're also a bum marksman. It stands to reason, doesn't it, that you can't be good at *this*?"

He struck the other on the jaw as he spoke, rocking his head back. To his amazement the eyes opposite him did not glaze. Instead, fury flamed in them, and the jaw that he had jolted seemed to stiffen.

"That's what you think!" came in a hoarse bellow.

Limbs interlocked, the two men dropped to the ground and rolled over. The fact that Carstairs had recognized his assailant as George Bowles, Gleason's huge and taciturn gardener, was no help to him. The man was six feet six, and as strong as an ox.

He twisted Carstairs' arm back, and bit him in the shoulder.

"Fight clean, Bowles," Carstairs giped, concealing his agony with a grin which increased the other's rancor. Furiously he pummeled Carstairs, ignoring the angular knee which the still grinning botanist rammed into his stomach and the shower of fisticuffs which spatattered against his close-cropped head, rocking it to and fro.

Bitterly Carstairs realized that he had underestimated his adversary. The man could take it, and he could ladle it out. He could absorb so much punishment that Carstairs' plight was not an enviable one.

He was flat on his back, and Bowles was trying viciously to break his arm, and almost succeeding. Worse, the big gorilla's punches were packed with dy-

namite, and coming faster and faster.

Carstairs fought with all his strength, but gradually he felt himself growing weaker. In desperation he squirmed and twisted, dragging himself over the ground, his shoulders jerking. He reached a jagged outcropping of rock on the slightly sloping floor of the ravine, where he furiously endeavored to raise his shoulders when Bowles began violently to shiver. The half-Nelson which he had thrown about Carstairs relaxed, and a convulsive shudder shook him.

Stunned, Carstairs wrenched his arm free, twisted about and raised his fist for a crushing blow that wasn't needed. Bowles had rolled over on his side, and was lying utterly rigid, a bubbling froth on his lips. Clinging to his neck was a small, strawberry-colored nettle.

Horror struck, Carstairs stared at it, unable to believe his eyes. It was in all respects an exact duplicate of the one which was still clinging to his own shoulder, except for one thing. It was scarcely one-fourth as large.

CHAPTER III

Blood Pressure of a Plant

A SHRILL ululation caused Carstairs to raise his eyes and glance startingly about him. The wobbly he saw was one-fourth the normal size. A baby wobbly, an unmistakable fledgling of the species which Gleason had captured and studied was standing a few feet away, its tendrils fluttering in the hot air currents from the tower's turbines which were swirling down into the gulch in erratic gusts, its small root-body quivering in infantile panic.

Lifting Bowles' limp body in his arms, and carrying it to the vacuum plane was a nerve-racking ordeal, because Carstairs was sure he had another corpse on his hands. It wasn't until he was back in the tower, with a stirring and groaning Bowles clutching at his sleeve, that the truth struck him like a bolt from

the blue, rocking him back on his heels and shedding dazzlement in all directions.

The big, pugnacious bruiser was *allergic* to nettles! So allergic that the shock of one entering his flesh had brought on a convulsion and laid him out limp. It wasn't such a rare mishap from a medical point of view, but it left Carstairs stunned and gasping. That big, husky giant—brought low by a nettle flung by a baby wobbly!

Carstairs deposited Bowles on the floor of Gleason's sleeping turret, directly under a dim cold light bulb. The big, rectangular chamber had quieted down, for Vera Dorn had not been idle in Carstairs' absence. She had sprayed a narcotizing vapor over the three wobblies, and locked them up in a metal herbarium.

She had sent Mona Clayton back to her sleeping turret on the floor below, and turned on Showalter a glance so withering that he had slunk furtively into shadows. The nephew was standing now in a dim recess behind Gleason's bed, his eyes boring holes in the gloom.

Bowles raised himself on his elbow, trying desperately to talk his way back into Carstairs' good graces. His voice was husky, and all the pugnacity had gone out of him.

"I lost my head when you swung at me," he muttered. "I've nothing against you, Carstairs, but when you came at me like that I had to defend myself, didn't I? I'm hot-tempered, sure. But I didn't kill Gleason. It was that little hyena there."

Mentally Carstairs docketed for reference the astonishing fact that everyone referred to Gleason's nephew as a hyena, skunk, or snake. He gnawed at his underlip, and fixed Bowles with an accusing stare.

"You blasted *before* I clipped you," he said. "You tried to shoot me down in cold blood. You tried to shoot Showalter down. Why did you crouch in darkness outside that window and try to drill him?"

"I'll tell you why," Bowles choked. "I took my job here seriously. I like

flowers. That may seem sort of screwy to you, but I mean it."

"It doesn't," Carstairs assured him.

"Well, you've seen Gleason's orchids. Glass-encased, sure, with air pumped in. Tropical terrestrial plants—nothing fancy about 'em. But I took a personal pride in them."

"You did a good job," Carstairs admitted. "Raising *perfect* plants under artificial sunlight is a tough assignment."

"That's it—*perfect*," Bowles cried eagerly. "My orchids were perfect. Perfect, you hear? I liked my job, and I wanted to keep it. But *he* didn't want me too."

He gestured toward the shadows where Gleason's nephew stood. Showalter had lit a cigarette and was puffing on it furiously.

"He came stumbling into the greenhouse last night as high as a kite," Bowles muttered accusingly. "He tore my flowers up by the roots. He upset trays, and turned a hose on my finest bed. Did you ever see fine blooms flattened into a mud soup?"

Carstairs nodded sympathetically. "I would have perhaps killed him myself. We're all savages when something rasps us in a vital spot. But you had a few hours to calm down in."

"Yeah, but he ran to his uncle like a dirty little schoolboy sneak. He accused me of tanking up, and throwing my own trays around. Gleason gave me my notice before he turned in at midnight. He called me a liar, refused to hear me out."

"He wouldn't listen to *any* honest man or woman," shrilled a quavering voice from the doorway. "He deserved to die. He was a hard man—cold and unjust. There was no compassion in him. I'm glad he's dead!"

CARSTAIRS swung about. A frail, white-haired old woman had slipped into the room and was standing by Vera's side. As Carstairs stared at her in consternation she raised a clawlike, veined hand and pointed at the still figure on the bed.

"May you rest in torment, James Gleason," she shrilled.

son," she shrilled.

Carstairs had had about enough. He crossed to the door in three long strides, turned the old woman about, and guided her gently but firmly into the corridor.

"Go back to your room," he said. "And stay there. If I need you, I'll send for you. You've been a good housekeeper to James Gleason. Why should you hate him so much?"

The old woman shook her head. "It's not for me to be telling you," she muttered. "You'll find out soon enough."

Returning to the sleeping turret, Carstairs swabbed sweat from his forehead and spoke crisply to Vera Dorn.

"I said that something diabolic had occurred here. I'm afraid it's worse than that. Listen carefully, Vera. I'm going to take one of the wobblies up to my turret. I want you to bring me Gleason's notes. All of them, you understand? His day-by-day observations, the complete record of what he saw on the mountains when he studied the wobblies from behind a blind. His speculations as to their feeding habits, the chemical and osmotic tests which he made on the three specimens which are now our guests."

"But you've almost memorized those notes," Vera protested.

"I know, but there are minor details I may have overlooked. One thing more—give me fifteen or twenty minutes' leeway before you snap to it."

Twelve minutes later Vera Dorn tapped apprehensively on the door of Carstairs' sleeping turret.

"Come in," a grim voice said.

Vera obeyed, shivering. She knew John Carstairs. He was never so unpredictable as when he asked her to do something for him when he had all the pieces in an unspeakably terrifying case.

She knew that he was at the crucial stage. The glint in his eyes, his air of repressed excitement, and his willingness to permit four vengeful people to remain at liberty indicated that he was prepared to act swiftly and inexorably.

Vera Dorn had steeled herself to encounter an unusual manifestation of Carstairs' genius at work, but the sight which she saw when she shut the door

firmly and turned to face her employer was so completely ludicrous that it chilled her more than a gruesome exhibit would have done.

In a way, it was a little gruesome—comically so, perhaps, like a child's rag doll dangling from a hangman's noose—but unspeakably nightmarish in its implications.

One of the wobblies was sitting upright in a chair by the window, its tendril-arms bound by thin wires and its stumpy legs interlocked. The anesthetic vapor which Vera had sprayed over it had worn off, and it was squirming about and emitting shrill ululations.

Clamped to its rugose, tapering head was a semi-circular metal disk, somewhat resembling an aluminum eyeshield. From the disk a thin glass tube descended to the creature's "waist" and branched off at right angles to its body-root. A few inches beyond the bent section of the tube the glass terminated in a flexible rubber extension which carried the tubular portion of the apparatus across the floor to Carstairs' hand.

Carstairs was sitting on the edge of his bed, pressing a large rubber bulb at five-second intervals. Every time he gave the bulb a squeeze a pale, greenish fluid bubbled and frothed in the glass portion of the tube, occasionally ascending to the half-disk on the plant creature's head.

"Good Lord!" Vera Dorn choked.

"Quiet, Vera," Carstairs cautioned. "If the pressure goes any higher we'll have a dead wobbly on our hands."

"John, are you out of your mind? Why did you truss that poor thing—pressure! John, what do you mean?"

"I'm taking its blood pressure," Carstairs said. "To be strictly accurate, its sap pressure, although the fluid which circulates in its veins contains actual blood-plates, and mononuclear cells containing basophilic granules. Its blood pressure is unbelievably high now. So high that—" He stared at her steadily. "Well, it will be labeled Exhibit A, Vera. And I wouldn't want to be in the shoes of a certain party when I lay my

findings before a jury."

VERA DORN'S jaw sagged. "John Carstairs, how can you take the blood pressure of a plant? I never heard of such a thing."

"Vera, I thought you majored in botany at college," Carstairs said acidly. "Perhaps you'd better go back for another semester of intensive osmotic research. You know, summer course for girls with low I.Q.s who can't quite make the grade."

Vera flushed scarlet. "What has osmosis to do with taking the blood pressure of a plant?"

"Plenty," Carstairs grunted. "Most plants, as you know suck nourishment from the soil through their roots by osmosis, and draw it up through the woody part of their stems by capillary attraction and a process known as transpiration. All these processes are accelerated by the pressure of sugar and salt in the sap."

"But—"

"Let me finish, Vera. In terrestrial plants the nutrient fluid is an amalgam of common minerals. But in lunar plants a different kind of nourishment is sucked up, and their veins are filled with specialized chemicals capable of accelerating its absorption."

"When osmosis is accelerated to an abnormal extent a plant's blood pressure begins to rise. It may reach twenty or thirty atmospheres. On Earth many plants exhibit the symptoms of high blood pressure, but leaf or tendril evaporation drains off the excess nourishment and keeps them from going into convulsions."

"Here on the moon there is no such safety valve. Plants scarcely perspire at all, due to environmental factors. They have to eat sparingly, or else."

"But no plant or animal ever eats sparingly," Vera protested. "A dog, for instance, never knows when to stop, and the same rule applies all down the biological scale."

Carstairs nodded. "True. But you're forgetting that living creatures gorge themselves only when there is an abun-

dance of nourishment. Wobblies feast on a substance which is rare on Luna. Being perambulating plants, they have to suck it in from the nearly airless vacuum which is the moon's atmosphere through their body roots, and it costs them a tremendous effort. Ordinarily their blood pressure remains low because they have adapted themselves to an environment in which nourishment is scarce.

"But nourishment wasn't scarce here in the tower last night. I've a very sick wobbly on my hands, a wobbly that is going to put a noose around somebody's neck. That wasn't Gleason we heard screaming last night. It was three wobblies with high blood pressure, ululating together in his sleeping turret."

Vera's lips were white. "Whose neck, John?"

Carstairs shook his head. "No, you don't. Vera. You'll know when I'm sure. I've got to get answers to a couple of space-o-grams first. If what I suspect is true, the murderer is no ordinary criminal. He—or she—must possess a mind of the first order of malign cunning."

He shuddered. "It gives me a sick feeling in the pit of my stomach."

"It does me, too," Vera flared, biting her lip. "Although you won't tell me a darned thing about it. I'm that way—sympathetic when my boss gets a tum-mache."

Carstairs scowled. "All right, Vera, I asked for it. You're hard and unsympathetic, but you understand me. I feel sort of helpless when I close in for the kill. I like to be—well, coded."

Vera kissed him, patting his cheek. "Sure, I know. That's why I'm supposed to be in love with you."

"Aren't you?"

"I think maybe I am." She looked at him hopefully.

Carstairs' eyes narrowed. "All right, then you can do something for me. I want you to get them all together in Gleason's turret—Bowles, Showalter, the Chinese butler, Mona Clayton, and that sweet, white-haired grandmother,

Miss Newton. Get them together, and give me twenty more minutes. When I come down I'll try to satisfy your curiosity."

"John Carstairs, if you got romantic for once in your life and whispered sweet nothings to me without an ulterior motive," Vera declared, "do you know what I'd do?"

"No, what?"

"Turn into a wobbly. I'd have to do that to keep my blood pressure down."

She went out, slamming the door so violently that the wobbly emitted a long-drawn ululation, and squirmed violently in its chair.

CHAPTER IV

Botanical Stoolpigeon

WHEN John Carstairs appeared in the doorway of Gleason's sleeping turret the five white-lipped people gathered there stared at him as though he were a visitor from Saturn. His expression was utterly inscrutable, and an almost godlike detachment seemed to emanate from him.

He hoped that none of the five suspected that he felt like a scared kid with one exploratory thumb poised above a high-voltage electric wire.

Nodding at Vera, he crossed in silence to the bed where Gleason's sheet-covered body lay, made sure that the cold light did not fall directly on his head and shoulders, and swept the five suspects with his gaze.

He began to talk at once, fixing Henry Showalter with an accusing stare. The nephew began instantly to tremble. His air of vicious cynicism had dropped from him, like a cloak that he had found much too costly to wear.

"If there is any crime you would not have committed to get your hands on your uncle's wealth, Showalter," Carstairs said, "it would have to be mentioned in whispers by anyone with an ounce of decency in him. You were quite capable of killing your uncle, and you would have experienced no remorse.

I've a pretty complete account here of your—well, I'll be charitable, and call them escapades—on Earth.

"I sent a space-o-gram to the New York Police Department, Mr. Showalter. You've a record of seven arrests, ranging from drunkenness to arson. You're a thorough rotter, but—"

He frowned. "You did not kill him. You are neither a chemist or a genius."

Carstairs turned his gaze to Gleason's housekeeper with a shudder of disgust. The white-haired old woman quivered.

"Why are you staring at me like that? Do you think I killed him?"

"No," Carstairs said. "But you are suffering from the same disease, I'll be

people left in the world," Carstairs agreed, swinging suddenly toward George Bowles and Mona Clayton. They were standing close together, their faces drained of all color, their eyes fastened on Carstairs.

"Sulphuretted hydrogen, Bowles," Carstairs said softly, "causes symptoms which end rapidly in death. It is one of the deadliest gases known, comparable only to cyanide fumes in the swiftness with which it acts. If the concentration is marked, fatal effects by inhalation are immediate."

His jaw muscles tightened. "Oh, you were clever, Bowles. Posing as a humble lover of flowers, an eccentric with



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charitable and call it ungratefulness. Gleason raised your salary every time you came to him with a hard luck story. The last time you rasped his patience a little, and he didn't give you as much as you thought you deserved. Consequently, you hated him."

He shrugged, turning to the Chinese butler. "You're a pretty good guy," he said. "You didn't kill him, did you, Lee Chan?"

The yellow man shook his head. "He was a pretty good guy himself," he sing-songed. "The kindest man I've ever known."

"Yes, there are still a few kindly

only one consuming passion in life. A simple gardener, living for his plants."

"You're crazy, Carstairs," Bowles choked. "What are you driving at?"

"You were not only interested in orchids, Bowles," Carstairs continued relentlessly. "You were interested in wobblies, and you persuaded Gleason to let you see his notes. Your thumbprints are on the sheets Miss Dorn brought to me. You are also a toxicologist, Bowles. You worked in a chemical laboratory on Earth, and you knew that sulphuretted hydrogen has one disadvantage as a killing agent.

"It leaves an odor, the strongest odor

of any lethal chemical, one which hovers in the air and impregnates the flesh of the victim."

Mona Clayton's agitated voice rang out across the chamber. "He lies! Oh, darling, defend yourself, tell him—"

"Darling, is it?" Carstairs rasped. "I thought so. Bowles, you knew that sulphuretted hydrogen leaves an unmistakable odor, but you also knew that the wobbles feast on it. It is their natural source of nourishment. It clings to the walls of deep gulches in the mountains, and they suck it in by osmosis through their permeable body-roots!"

MONA CLAYTON uttered a faint moan. But the botanical detective went on relentlessly.

"Last night you treated the three wobbles which Gleason had captured to a feast. You smashed the glass herbarium and released them, after pumping sulphuretted hydrogen into Gleason's sleeping turret through a sprayer from outside the window to kill him. You knew that wobbles can scent sulphuretted hydrogen half across the moon, and you figured they would streak like starved bloodhounds to Gleason's turret.

"They did. Vera Dorn encountered one in the corridor and one in her sleeping turret, but wobbles are like that. They know that a roundabout way is often the quickest distance between two points on the Moon. They climbed down outside, and entered through the window which you had purposely left open. When their blood pressure rose and they ululated, Miss Dorn and I raced downstairs, to discover they had sucked up all the sulphuretted hydrogen in the air leaving it crisp and odorless.

"Gleason usually slept with his windows thrown wide, but last night you must have had to raise the pane to pump the gas in. Although we found the casement the way you had left it, there was still air in the room. The wobbles would have sucked that giveaway odor out of Gleason himself, but we got to him in time, and a little of it lingered when I bent over him. You thought the

wobbles would clear away every trace of the gas, and make it look as though Gleason had died of natural causes."

Carstairs's eyes were steely slits. "When you saw I had it tabbed as murder you tried to throw suspicion on Showalter by accusing him of upsetting your trays last night, and subtly hinting that maybe Gleason hadn't quite believed his nephew's version of the affair either. In other words, you implied that Showalter was in danger of being cut off without a cent."

"That's a lie," Bowles muttered hoarsely. "You're trying to frame me, Carstairs."

"Think so? I've got a space-o-gram here from Earth which says that you and Miss Clayton have been partners in crime for a decade, and are wanted for blackmail and homicide by the San Francisco police.

"It was beautifully planned, Bowles. All you had to do was murder Gleason and the rest would unwind like a carefully oiled spring. Showalter would inherit a fortune, Mona would marry Showalter, and then you and Mona would take a vacation together, with Showalter's inheritance in an overnight bag to brighten the trip."

Carstairs looked straight at Mona Clayton. Her hands were clenched and her features seemed all wrenched apart. "You should have picked a less allergic partner, Mona. I suspected him from the first, but what really clinched it was his aversion to nettles. He plucked most of the nettles out of the wobbles with tweezers before releasing them.

"It was just blue funk, I guess—he couldn't bear the thought of being in the same tower with nettle-hurling wobbles running around loose."

"But one of those wobbles hurled a nettle at me, John," Vera said. "And at you. You've one in your shoulder now."

Carstairs nodded and held up his hand. "I said *most* of the nettles, Vera. When I examined the wobbles a half-hour ago I couldn't find a nettle in them. I knew then that I had him, and I could see the noose tightening about his neck. The

fact that he must have overlooked three nettles deep in the pouch of the tallest wobbly won't influence the jury much. Three nettles! One for you, one for me, and this one for evidence of—"

Before he could finish Bowles dived for the window. There was a splintering crash as his gigantic bulk tore a hole in the pane and vanished.

Carstairs crossed the room in a flying leap. For the barest fraction of a second he paused to hurl the casement open and clamp on his oxygen mask. Mona Clayton screamed, and Vera grasped her arms from behind and held on tight.

Cursing himself for a sissy, Carstairs tore out into the lunar night. His reluctance to tear his face to ribbons had proved a costly mistake. Bowles was thirty feet away, and running along the edge of the platform toward a weaving spiral of light.

Instantly Carstairs had a vision of himself descending once again into the foothills on the thrumming strut of a vacuum plane. It was an appalling vision and it chilled his heart like ice. It also stopped him in his tracks.

He hurled the nettle with surprising ease, his body twisting a little like a pitcher in a game called baseball.

Bowles shrieked. Spinning about on his toes, he tottered for an instant at the edge of the platform and then plunged

downward, his body revolving as he fell toward peaks which looked like stalactites in reverse, each one of which seemed capable of impaling him and rotating him in screaming agony to the end of time.

Carstairs turned away, shaken, and a little sick.

"**D**ARLING," Vera said, eternities later, "you'll have to operate on both of us. There is still one nettle in my shoulder and one in yours. You can't just pluck them out."

"No, I suppose not," Carstairs grunted, reaching for a bottle of antiseptic and a cotton pad. "But next time you bump into a wobbly in the dark, try talking to it. It will quiet right down."

"You mean my voice would calm it down?" exclaimed Vera Dorn, her eyes glowing. "John, how sweet of you."

Carstairs smiled, dabbing at her shoulder. "When you pay a woman a compliment, she always stays put for a minute. I've never known it to fail."

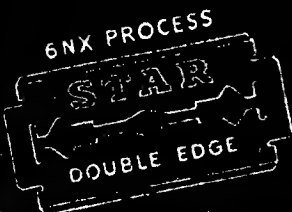
"Then you didn't mean that—about my voice?"

"Oh, certainly, but I wanted to get you to hold still."

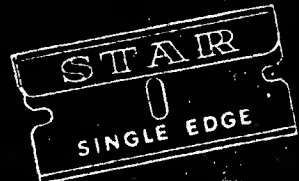
The silence in the big, rectangular turret was broken by the sound of a slap.

*DON'T BE CHEEKY,
MISTER!*

*WHY NOT?
I SHAVE WITH
STAR BLADES!*



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THE DEVIL'S FIDDLE

By N. R. DE MEXICO

Landau Was Only a Second-Rate Musician Until He Acquired the Guarnerius of Paganini—and Lost His Soul in the Transaction!

CHAPTER I

Paganini's Violin



TO BEGIN with, Landau had never been a great violinist. He was one of the sort that gets to play a Beethoven sonata with some third-string accompanist in

Mudflats-on-the-Rillerah, sitting in on an occasional session of the town Pro-Musica Quartet just to keep his hand in. He was definitely second-rate.

The only difference between Jascha Landau and all the other second-rate fiddle-scrappers was that Landau had money. His people made alarm-clocks by the millions—and he could give private concerts for his friends without annoying them too much. They came for the brandy, which was the very best.

When he wanted a manager, he picked me. I didn't pick him. We've been concert managers in my family for years. Theodore Thomas and my father used to be just like that, and I can remember Huneker with a girl on his lap, playing chess with an older brother of mine. So when a dilettante like Landau thought of a manager, he thought of our name.

He had done a little concertizing through the Middle-West which is the only part of the country where they'll stand for the sort of fiddling he could do before the thing happened that made him the biggest violinist in the

world. Nobody—but nobody!—had ever heard of him. He wasn't a name. He was just somebody that played a fiddle when the provinces wanted a fiddle played in the high-school auditorium.

It was a raw, sleety November night when he called me up about the Guarnerius. His voice came over the phone with a half-hysterical sound, a sort of mixture of agitated delirium and incoherent delight.

"I bought it!" he kept saying. "I bought it! I bought the Guarnerius! I got it for practically nothing."

He kept repeating that over and over in various keys. Emphasizing *the* Guarnerius every time. Not a Guarnerius. *THE* Guarnerius. Finally he became rational enough to babble an invitation for me to come over and see the thing, and then he hung up on me while I was still saying okay.

It didn't make much sense. But I got dressed and called a taxi. This business isn't what it used to be. We're not impresarios any more, and we don't have limousines and Inverness capes. We're just managers, like prize-fighters have. And we use taxis.

Landau was living in an apartment hotel over on Central Park West near the Museum, which wasn't very far away. And there didn't seem much else to do that late at night.

ANYWAY, I was pretty curious about this business of calling it *the* Guarnerius. It wasn't as though it was a Strad. There aren't so many Stradivarius violins running around for sale—and each one with a pedigree as long as your arm—that you can't talk about one as *the* Strad. But a Guarnerius is different.

A COMPLETE FANTASTIC NOVELET



Standing before Landau, black-robed and with folded arms, was a giant figure of a man

Of course, it's a very fine fiddle. Next to those red-brown poems in hard-wood and glue that old Antonio hacked out in seventeenth century Cremona, the Guarnerius is as good as they come. But it isn't a Strad. The tone is much sharper and a little thinner. Piercing, sort of. With none of that orotund fullness that the Violin-maker of Cremona carved and varnished into his masterpieces on the roof of his old house. And most of all, a Guarnerius isn't as hard to come by at all. So I was curious about Landau's excitement.

He let me into his apartment himself. It was like an undertaker ushering you for a view of the dear departed lying in state. Landau skittered along ahead of me into the practice room as quietly as a cat, and my own heels banging along the rug sounded like empty freight-cars in the night.

The room was dark, except for a study-lamp that he'd rigged up to spot on a glass case over against the side wall. Inside was the violin.

It was a beautiful thing. All dark and shining. It wasn't until you got really close to it that you could see the scratches on the smooth belly. But they were there all right, deep scars in the hard varnish near the bridge of the instrument, as though the thing had got into the hands of a guitarist whose fingernails had scraped across the strings and chipped at the sounding-board.

All along the shining black finger-board there were tiny crescent fingernail marks scored into the surface at each of the stops, and the ebony tuning pegs were rubbed to a strange lustre. It was really a beautiful instrument, beautiful as only a fine violin or an airplane motor can be. Only those marks that came from playing showed against the fiddle's magnificent sheen. There were no other scratches or scars or marks, and there was a darkling, metallic quality to the shimmering wood.

There was something sinister about it too. Standing there, looking at that fiddle, you could almost feel a separate life pulsing through its dark surfaces. Maybe it was the single

spot-light shining on it in the darkened room, fitting over the wood as my footsteps made it tremble imperceptibly, but I swear it looked alive.

I must have stood there for more than a minute, staring at the instrument, fascinated. And all the time Landau said nothing. Only in his glowing eyes, almost amber in the soft reflected shine of the spot-light as I turned to him questioningly, could I detect his excitement. That and the nervous tensing and relaxing of his fingers, as though they itched to get hold of that fiddle. Then he spoke, and the hoarse sound of his usually modulated voice shattered the silence and sent a sudden chill down my back.

"Let me show you," he whispered. His voice was very different. The last faint traces of a Russian accent which I had come to consider his normal speech had been immeasurably strengthened by his excitement, and there was something like rasping defiance in his tone.

He lifted the glass lid carefully from the case, and with a strange, grabbing motion caught the violin at the neck and lifted it out. There was sweat on his temples, he was so tense. I felt nervous myself. His hand clamped around that violin the way an electrician seizes a live-wire in his gloved hand. Not lightly, but with a hard, firm grip. Landau turned the violin over so that the light shone on its back. There, intricately carved into the beautiful surface, so lightly that the lettering barely cut into the wood itself was graven: "N. Paganini."

THAT was all, and that was enough.

Nicolò Paganini, the demon-violinist, second greatest of them all; his music silenced for one hundred and one years—this was his violin. This was the violin that had tortured out those intricate passages, those weird harmonies, those scales never heard before or since by human ears. This was the instrument that, like no other violin, had played arpeggi and appoggiaturi of diabolical difficulty and at demonic speed.

This was the fiddle that, as the incredible virtuoso had lain dying, he had seized in his long, thin hands and tried, for the last time, to play. There was no question of genuineness. It was the real thing. Only the great Paganini could have left those marks on its surface. Only he had played the violin half as a guitar. Only his hawkish fingers could have left those perfect tiny arc-shaped marks precisely on the stops of the finger-board. Only he could have so worn away the surface of the tuning pegs, twisting and changing them as he played.

Landau was triumphant. His face, normally as somber and unmoving as a statue of Buddha contemplating his navel, was lighted by a broad, brilliant-eyed smile. There was a fierce, unholy glee written in every line of his face. His eyes glowed like two coals from the fires of Hell. The soul of the third-rate violinist was suffused with the flame of the master of them all.

"I show you," he said, and fiercely snatched up the bow that had lain beside the violin in the case. The bow, too, was old, although it had obviously been recently restrung with lustrous blue-black hair. "*His* bow," Landau explained, flourishing it in the air. "And strung with a woman's hair, just the way he had it."

I didn't care much for that angle, but the idea immediately flashed through my head:

"What a publicity slant!"

Landau drew the bow once, smoothly, across the G-string. It almost seemed as though an eldritch light flared from the violin, growing in intensity as the note became stronger, and fading to a murky glow as the sound ceased. Then Landau began to play, ripping down with the bow in the wild opening measures of the "Devil's Laughter" caprice, Paganini's Thirteenth.

Landau's face changed as he played. No longer was he the dead-pan, third-string imitation of Heifetz. His eyes burned and flashed. He bared his teeth in a horrible grimace. He twisted his face and tightened his jaw, mashing the flesh of his chin flat against the belly of the fiddle as he negotiated

the swift passages. His whole body writhed and swayed. Not like a gypsy-violinist in a beer hall, but twisting and tensing as though swept by a searing flame.

The music? The music was incredible. It leaped like a maddened stallion. It raged and tore and screamed. It whistled and laughed. It soared and lunged. It chuckled, it snorted, and it laughed! Not the imitation of human laughter that sheep-gut and horse-hair scraped together can wring from a violin, but real laughter—wild laughter. The Devil's Laughter. A fiendish, gurgling "Ah-ha-haaaa!" as articulate as a voice.

I've heard that Thirteenth Caprice played by all the big names ever since I was a kid standing behind my father's chair when musicians came to see him. Sarasate, Auer, Wilhelm, Kreisler, Heifetz, Szigeti, Wolfstahl, Merckel, Hubermann—everybody—I've heard them all play it. But with them it was just a great virtuoso piece. A bunch of intricate notes that rose and fell and did sound something like a cackling laugh.

But Landau made that violin *really* laugh. And he laughed with it, mad gales of laughter till between the two of them the room shook and the laughter re-echoed from the very vaults of Hell. Finally it was over. Landau bowed to me; crisp, mocking, devilish.

"Now I really show you something," he said.

HE FLIPPED open the keyboard of the concert-grand at one side of the room, set the music of the Schubert "Ave Maria" before me and motioned me with his bow to play the accompaniment. I sat down at the piano and gave him the chords.

His first six notes were perfect. Like a bell. They had that rich, round, smooth tone that only Kreisler at his top could produce. And the words were almost human. The violin seemed to be singing in a human voice: "Ave Maria . . . Hail Mary. . ."

But there it stopped. After those first six notes came a hellish travesty of Schubert. The melody was there.

But it was weak and enfeebled, a pitiful drowned thing before the onslaught of diabolical laughter that swept through the violin. My hands stopped on the keys. I was stunned. The violin was laughing again.

Landau was sawing away at the right notes—I could see that—but the Devil's Laughter was coming out instead. The violin was chuckling and laughing fiendishly. It whistled and cat-called at the melody. When the phrase "Mother of God . . ." came around each time, the violin jeered and swore and spat.

Occasionally Schubert's melodic line would rise through for a moment and I would punch out the rolling chords while the melody swelled in its simple grandeur. Then it would collapse suddenly, and the gales of hysterical merriment would crush it between walls of raucous sound.

But the incredible part was Landau's playing. He had stopped fingering the strings properly. His hands leaped about on the fiddle. He changed the pitch with the tuning-keys at every other bar. He swept his fingertips over the strings like a guitarist. He plucked them in a racing pizzicato. He played double-stops, triple stops, quadruple stops! He bounced his bow on the strings like a drunken feather. His body swayed and shifted with the music and his face was contorted to the personification of evil. His teeth were bared and he was slavered at the mouth. He played like mad.

And then he stopped.

"Paganini," he said with a malicious grin splitting his ugly face, "almost never he didn't play other people's music after he got this violin." He thrust the instrument toward me. "Here," he ordered, "you try."

CHAPTER II

Demonic Music

I TOOK the thing in my hands, and something very like an electric shock burned at my hands and flowed through my body. Well, I'm no vio-

linist. All I know are a few scales and the sort of kindergarten melodies they teach beginners. The piano is my instrument. But *that* violin I could play!

It played itself.

When I went for a wrong note it fought me and put my fingers right. The bow swept back and forth, lifting and dipping like a falling scarf without any effort on my part. And yet I was as tense as a thief in the night. That infernal fiddle did everything but pull a knife on me.

I tried some Hungarian Dances—the easy ones, the first and fifth and sixth. But the hard ones came out—Brahms' last three—dancing like mad.

I wondered if I remembered Dvorák's Slavonic Dances, and the thought no more than entered my mind when the eighth dance was winging out of the violin, dragging my big, clumsy banana-fingers along after it. Stuff came out I never heard in my life, and when my hands and neck felt as though they were breaking with the strain, I suddenly heard myself swing into Wieniawski's Second Concerto, and the circus-rider finale "à la Zingara" came spilling out of the *f*-slots of that Devil's fiddle.

The music leaped and twirled and cried through the room. It was alive. And when I stopped and laid the instrument down, it was as though half the life had gone out of me. I clawed out my handkerchief and wiped the sweat off my face. My hands were trembling.

Landau picked up the Guarnerius then, and it was with him that it reached its unsanctified heights. He experimented with its flair for sacrilege. We had heard what happened to the "Ave Maria." He now tried a Hebrew melody. The violin twisted it into knots. He began Gretchaninoff's magnificent two-fold litany, the "Glory to God" of the Orthodox Church.

He couldn't finish it. The violin wove in an obscene limerick-tune. Landau tried Chinese religious liturgy, then an African chant for the sacred dead. No go. The devil in that violin was an international devil. He was the enemy of every God, and

their music was not going to be played on his violin!

Landau gave up trying that and began to play concert pieces. No Strad ever made more perfect music. It sang in high, flute-like notes. It boomed with the deep rich resonance of the 'cello. It imitated birds and animals and men. It spoke in spook-voices and unknown tongues. It laughed and wept. It jeered and giggled. It spewed out a maelstrom of sound, a tempest of music, a violinistic orgy.

There was nothing beyond that violin. With it in his hands Landau played better than I had ever heard him play before. Better than I ever heard anyone play before—or since. And faster, certainly. I stumbled my fingers all over the keyboard of the concert-grand trying to keep up with him.

It was five in the morning when he finally quit, and I left Landau stroking the instrument as though it were a woman he loved. I walked out of the house and ploughed through the slush in the park. I was halfway across Madison Avenue before I realized where I was. Later, at home and in bed, when the exhilaration of that wizard-violin had left me, I began to think about its origin. That got me up out of bed, and I went to look up something about Paganini.

IF ALL the virtuosi of music, he was certainly the most mysterious. When he died in 1840 he left behind him music that no other virtuoso could play, no matter how great they were. Most of his music wasn't published in his lifetime. Much of it may be lost as having been impossible to write down, and unplayable for anyone else even if it had been written down. There were other virtuosi, titans of music, but Paganini stood out among them like a lighthouse in a fog.

And with his music he left legends. Stories that he drove at night in a black coach with the Devil riding the lead-horse. Tales of the concert platform, where the Devil was said to have appeared beside him in a smoke and flash of sulphur to guide Paganini's hands and bow. Even the fantasy that

he was, himself, the Devil, come to earth for a time.

There was the verified fact that he strung his bow with human hair, and there was the *legendary origin of his G-string Fantasia*: that he had killed a woman simply to used her entrails for stringing his violin, to get an ultra-perfection of tone from it, and that, in jail for this crime, he found that the damp dungeon air snapped all the delicate strings but one, and on that one he had to play.

Then, too, it was incontestable that for years his body had been refused burial in consecrated ground, and there was a story that violin music was heard to come from the coffin where he lay. And finally his violin had been willed to a museum with the provision that it was never to be played.

There was a point. How had Landau got hold of it? I never *did* find out about that. Nor, later, when he was appearing in Boston and Philadelphia and at Carnegie Hall, would he allow mention of the Paganini Guarnerius to appear in his publicity.

I think myself that when Italy entered the war two years ago, the government ordered the instrument transferred to some safe place, and someone then rang in a counterfeit for the original. How it was smuggled out of Italy and how it came into Landau's possession I have no idea. Landau was rich. That's all I know. I don't know for certain what became of the Guarnerius afterward either—but that can wait.

During the next few weeks I saw Landau almost constantly, although I never again touched the violin in his sight. He was like a tiger when anyone came near it. Before the Guarnerius had come along, he had practiced constantly, as desperate second-stringers will. But from that day on he was never heard to practice.

I asked his Filipino boy about it, and I was told that Landau frequently closeted himself alone with the instrument. But no sound ever came from the room. Paganini, too, had never practiced. Frankly, I was very worried, and to make my disturbance more acute, Landau suddenly decided

he wanted to go on tour. No backwoods barnstorming. He wanted a first-class tour, hitting big towns.

It was practically impossible to book any sort of a first-class concert tour for Landau. He was too widely known as the "Alarm-Clock Dub." Finally, after running up a telephone bill between here and the West Coast that would have sickened the State Department, we broke the ice. Sir Thomas Beecham who was coasting around the country by way of promoting Anglo-American good feeling agreed to conduct two performances of the Beethoven Concerto, featuring Landau, with the Seattle Symphony. That was in mid-December. After that there was no trouble at all.

MY OFFICE was flooded with requests for Landau. Requests? Demands! The critics raved, and the audiences ravened for him. He played San Francisco, and Monteux kissed him on both cheeks when he finished Lalo's "Symphonie Espagnole." He played Paganini's own concerto in the Hollywood Bowl at a special concert held in mid-winter, and the roar of the audience insisting on encores could be heard halfway across Los Angeles.

To satisfy them he ended with Paganini's "Perpetual Motion" done in just a shade under three minutes, although the critics unanimously insisted later that their watches must have been in error. In living memory no violinist had ever done the "Perpetual Motion" in less than four minutes. Paganini alone had been able to do it in three.

Landau played Denver, Minneapolis, Chicago, St. Louis, Cleveland, Detroit and Philadelphia, and in January Koussevitzky arranged to feature him with the Boston Symphony. In America that's the top rung of the ladder for a soloist. I felt swell about it, but somehow I wondered whether it was really honest.

I hadn't seen Landau since he had flown to the West Coast to appear in Seattle, and when the Boston appearance was arranged, I took the night-boat up to be on the spot and do some advance publicity. The performance was scheduled for the last week in

February, and the program was to be the Brahms Concerto in D Major, the most fiendishly difficult and taxing of them all. Well, set a demon-fiddle to play a demon-concerto I thought. But less than a week before the opening date, I got a telegram from Landau.

It read:

CANCEL ARRANGEMENTS FOR
BRAHM'S CONCERTO STOP
ATTEMPT ARRANGE WITH
KOUSSEVITSKY FOR PERFORM-
ANCE OF OWN CONCERTO STOP
SCORE AVAILABLE TWO DAYS
BEFORE CONCERT: LANDAU.

That was all, and that was plenty. Dr. Koussevitzky is an agreeable man. But no conductor likes to start rehearsing a new work two days before the concert, let alone program a score that he has never even seen. I argued my fool head off, waving around a batch of press-clippings big enough to choke a horse, and only after my own assurances had been solemnly given—with references to my father's memory and not inconsiderable misgivings—was the thing finally brought about. I was glad I had come up to Boston now that this had happened, and I waited on pins and needles for the promised score. Exactly sixty-two hours before the concert was to be played, Landau appeared at my hotel.

It wasn't the same Landau I had known. No longer the impeccably dressed and immaculately laundered dilettante with a hand-woven tie. His face was haggard and distorted. His suit was baggy and missing a couple of buttons. His shirt was dirty. His hair was graying, and his eyes were sunken and feverish. I knew he was thirty-five years old, but he looked fifty-five.

Worst of all, he was jittery. His nerves were on edge, and over the edge. He shook like a man with the ague. Moreover, he had developed an almost unbelievable resemblance to Paganini, even to flowing side-hair which he was allowing to grow in a peculiar fashion. His nose seemed to have become more hooked and angular than I remembered it.

"Larry," he said when we were alone in my room, "I am going crazy."

HE LOOKED as though he expected some comment, some reassurance perhaps. But I saw that he was right and I couldn't think of anything to say that would hide what I really thought. He *did* seem to be going crazy. He went on.

"The Guarnerius, it will not let me alone. Always it keeps calling me. 'Landau,' it says to me. 'Landau, play the Caprice. Play this, Landau. Play that.' At night I don't sleep. The violin must be played. I try to disobey it. I don't play what it says. I play something else, but my fingers go numb and don't do what I want. They play what the violin wants. When I try to relax—when I go to see a girl—to walk in the woods—that accursed fiddle calls me back. I hear it all the time. I must carry it with me always. It *demand*s to be played!

"When I stop at a hotel, I have to go out with the Guarnerius in the middle of the night and play it on street-corners like a beggar, because it *must* be played and I don't dare disturb the people in the hotel. I tried putting a mute on the strings so I could play it at night, but the mute shattered in pieces and the strings just went 'Zing! Zing! Zing!' and laughed at me.

"A whole gross of mutes I used up trying in Denver alone. It must be played! It must! I go crazy. I'm like an old man with a young wife. I don't eat, I don't sleep. I just play the violin till I collapse. I fall asleep on my feet playing, more than once, but the fiddle keeps my hands playing even while I sleep. And you think that's all? It makes me write music. Always if I'm not playing I must be writing music. . . ."

"You have the Concerto then?" I interrupted.

"The orchestration just. Here." He handed me a bulky manuscript. It was complete. I riffled through it. All the parts were delineated, and finished in flying pen-strokes. But the solo part was missing!

"What about the solo?"

"I didn't write it."

I'm afraid I went a little berserk then. No solo part written and only two days until the concert! It was

incredible! How could he do this to me? I had sworn to Koussevitzky. The bloody thing was scheduled. They had printed new posters, and at that very minute the men were pasting them up around town. I raged at Landau, but he just sat there.

"You don't understand," he finally said when I stopped for breath. "I cannot write the solo part. I can play it only, but the notes to write down, no. I remember them only when the violin is in my hands.

"No, my dear friend," he went on, shaking his head, "this is not the Landau First Concerto. This is the Concerto in Six Sharps of Paganini's Violin. I don't play this violin. This violin plays me. It uses me. It itches, and I must scratch it. Only when there is some violent excitement, gambling or a woman, can I stay away from it for a time. Then I am strong enough."

I thought of Paganini and his mania for gambling, a mania he gave up only when once he nearly gambled the Guarnerius away. And then he had turned for release to the women who threw themselves at him.

We talked, Landau and I, of trivialities for a while after that, nervously trying to cover up the uneasy fear that we both felt. Then he left to walk on the Common and try to quiet his nerves. I wondered if he was taking dope. No, I had seen the violin in action, too. You couldn't explain it away by blaming narcotics.

I spent the entire following day in violent debate with Dr. Koussevitzky, and finally won my point. But I think none of us—Landau, the conductor, the men in the orchestra, nor I—spent a calm moment until the performance. I felt sorry for the orchestra. Rehearsing a new concerto without a soloist. It must have been like eating soup with a fork.

The first-desk 'cellist wanted to quit. He was blue in the face trying to show me how impossible what I asked was. He told me the story about the 'cello player in the opera orchestra who had never actually seen an opera in the twenty years he had been playing there. And then one time when he had a night off he went to see "Car-

men" on a pass and he found out that at the part where the 'cello goes "Zum-zum-zum-zum" for five hundred and fifty measures, everybody else is going "To-re-a-dore-a . . .!"

I slapped him on the back and laughed lustily and told him that of course, that was the whole point; didn't he see? No, he didn't see. Neither did I, but I had to say something.

CHAPTER III

Dead Air

THE night of the concert, Symphony Hall was jammed. It was a manager's Mecca and a press-agent's dream come true, but to me it was just a nightmare. There was an overflow for blocks around, and the engineers told me that more than five million people would be listening to that concert over the radio.

It was over the radio that the difficulty came.

The opening number went off like magic—Berlioz' "Damnation of Faust" music. The applause died down and Landau came out, his face as white as his dress-shirt. They gave him a big hand and then sat back to hear what he could do. Koussevitzky looked over his orchestra, and set his feet hard on the podium. The hall was so quiet you could distinctly hear the double rap of the baton on the music stand. Concert-pitch was something you could feel in the air like rain waiting for a crash of lightning to send it down.

The introduction was a smooth, melodious allegro, with all the bass viols holding a quivering pedal note. Then one deep and somber chord, down-bowed in all the string-sections at once, sliced into the melody. Landau lifted his bow. The audience held its breath and he began.

The violin entered on a horrible, siren-like shriek, descending. Then a slurred note swelled, going down and down and further down. It went through me like a red-hot rivet. I felt my scalp crawl and my skin prickle.

The audience came up bolt upright on the edge of their seats. But that was nothing! Then came the laughter!

I have heard that thing since then in my sleep, and I will never forget it. It was horrible music. It was no music. It was no music at all. It was musical obscenity.

It was in no scale or time, or form, and, shrieking over all the noise and clangor, was the violin, going like an express-train and charging the air with a superhuman energy and a vile excitement. It was not modernistic music; not romantic, not classic, not anything that anyone in that hall had ever heard before. Scriabin and Schoenberg and Stravinsky and all their tortured modernities were sissy stuff by comparison. And yet it was full of melody. Melody of a debauched but wonderful sort.

Over the surging backdrop of the orchestra, Landau's violin savaged its way in a naked exhibition of virtuosity. It fought with the orchestra. It spat on its accompaniment. Did a lovely melody rise in the flutes, the violin ripped it in two with a sudden glissando plunging down the scale. Did the strings and woodwinds answer each other in perfect counterpoint, the violin leaped between them and turned their harmonies back, corkscrewing into every note and phrase of beauty, and trampling on it.

It challenged the timpani and the bull-fiddles; it outscrambled the brasses; it mocked the orchestra and the music, dissected it, improved upon it cynically, and then held it up to vulturous scorn. Such vitriolic morbidity, such tonal dynamite, such demonic-ultra-perfection of technique never assailed the ears of a sophisticated audience before. They were set back on their heels. They just sat there and listened with all their ears, gasping.

The orchestra behind Landau would rise and swell and spread, and the basses would rumble and the strings would quiver over a staccato in the trumpets, till you could see the dark maw of Hell opening, with the inscription in letters of smoky fire:

"Lasciate ogni speranza voi ch'entrate. . . . All hope abandon, ye who

enter here. . . ."

Then silence, hanging heavy in the air for the space of a heartbeat, and suddenly the terrible shriek of the violin would plunge into your belly like an arrow.

SEVEN cadenzas, there were, each one fiercer and more amazing than the one before, and one done entirely in pizzicato. Furthermore, the whole concerto was in one unbroken movement that lasted nearly three-quarters of an hour, giving neither the soloist nor the orchestra nor the audience a solitary moment to catch their breath until suddenly, and on a monumental, crashing discord, the Concerto was over.

Never did a staid Bostonian audience clap like that before or since. They went simply mad. They stood on their seats and hollered. They whistled between their fingers. They bellowed. They cheered. They were terrified by the music, appalled by the powers of a violinist who could play—let alone play such music and at such a rate of speed—for three-quarters of an hour without a single pause. And they were clapping to drown out an inner voice; shouting down the instinct that told them that there was something evil and superhuman here.

They don't believe in the supernatural in Boston any more. It isn't done. But they applauded and screamed and stamped till they were weak. Meanwhile the orchestra didn't bother to get up for the usual bow. They just sat there panting, and then wilted out off the stage.

The audience kept clapping all the way through the intermission. They worshipped Landau. There had never been such music before and the audience knew it. In his hand I could see the Guarnerius shining with pride. In Paganini's time it hadn't been able to show what it could really do; an audience would have refused to accept it then, and it had had to satisfy itself with technical pyrotechnics. But this was its night to howl.

The thing that happened, though, didn't occur in the concert hall. It was the broadcast.

The radio audience had heard noth-

ing but the orchestra! Not one note of that diabolical violin-music had gone out over the air! For all the radio listeners knew, there hadn't been any violin-soloist at all! The engineers tried to explain it away with technical blah about synthesized vibrations, electronic insufficiencies, and reversed acoustical phase conversion and all that. But the plain fact remained that the Paganini Guarnerius played only to the living ear. That was Landau's début and farewell in broadcasting.

He played the Mendelssohn Concerto the following day, and on Saturday of that week he gave the Vieuxtemps Fourth, adding a free display-passage of his own improvisation to that fiendishly difficult third movement which many of even the best virtuosi frankly skip as unplayable. Then he went back to Philadelphia.

The radio program had just puzzled the nation-wide audience, but it was promptly forgotten as merely another example of that awful modernistic music. And the lack of a violin soloist on the broadcast as heard, was discounted as just one of those things. Landau was in the public eye though, and the reports from critics who had been at the Boston concert were so frantic with praise, that Stokowski insisted that Landau come back to Philly. I went along with him.

IN THE train he confided to me that it was becoming increasingly difficult for him to play other people's music. The violin fought him, insisting that he play his own compositions—its own compositions. "I am just a gigolo for this fiddle," he wailed.

Personally, I was gradually coming to accept the instrument as a definite and tangible living personality. If you had asked me right out: "Do you believe such a thing as a demon-violin possible?" I would have had to say no. But in my heart I knew that it was possible, and I had to pretend to myself that it was the most natural thing in the world, or I would have gone crazy, too, just as I could see Landau going.

In Philadelphia he played the

Brahms Concerto finally, with Stokowski conducting. I refuse to believe that that performance has ever been equalled for dynamism and brilliant violence. Ronald Wise from the Victor people came galloping around to the dressing room after the concert and offered Landau everything but a deed to the Liberty Bell to record the Brahms. But Landau was afraid. He was sure the same manifestation that had ruined the radio broadcast would plague the recording. He told Wise so, but Wise only laughed.

"We don't have the kind of engineers here they have in Boston," he said expansively.

Landau hesitated, but Wise wouldn't take no for an answer. He dragged O'Connell up from the crowd and, with the recording director to back him up, he went to work on Landau seriously. Landau finally had to give in. It wouldn't have been human for a human man who had been a third-rater so long not to succumb to the thought of immortalizing himself on records. And Wise and O'Connell made it sound as though he would be doing them a favor.

They could see that they just barely had him convinced—Wise figured him for a manic-depressive, he told me later—and they decided to record that same afternoon.

They put through a call to Camden and ordered a couple of trucks sent out with the machines and waxes. The concert-meister herded the musicians out for a quick supper, and by seven o'clock everything was set up and they were ready to record.

The waxes started to turn. The starting buzzer sounded, and they began.

Well, the orchestral introduction went fine, but when Landau came in with the solo the engineer ripped his earphones off and jammed his thumb on the off-buzz. He came tearing down the aisle of the Academy of Music very red in the face.

"What about the solo?" he wanted to know.

Stokowski gave him a fishy stare. "I was under the impression that it was admirable," he said, very cold.

"What was?" yelled the engineer.

"I didn't hear it. I saw him playing, but I didn't hear him."

"Possibly the microphone is dead," Stokie said. "We'll wait while you fix it."

"That mike is perfect!" the engineer snarled. "I hooked it up myself. Besides, the orchestra comes over without a hitch. I don't understand it. . . ." He looked sick.

I lit a cigarette. It was no use. I knew it wouldn't be. You couldn't record that violin. The engineers began slinging wires and cables around like spaghetti; changing circuits, aiming microphones.

It didn't do any good. The head engineer broke down and began to cry out of sheer frustration. I felt sorry for him. He seemed to think it was all his fault. Everybody else thought so, too. After all, they could hear Landau playing.

O'Connell was a sensitive guy though. He had an inkling of what was wrong, but he didn't dare follow out that line of thought. Before they stopped trying to record he put the ear-phones on, and his face went white.

"Just the orchestra," he whispered to me. "My God!"

CHAPTER IV

Grand Finale

THE very next day Landau presented Stokowski with the score of a new Concerto and told him that the work must be played. We pretended that it had been written some time before. Nobody would have believed us if we had told the truth—that it had been written nights, all night, every night, since the Boston concert.

Stokie looked the score over. He's one man you can't say "must" to, but he knows good music when he sees it. He agreed. Then we came to the little matter of rehearsals without the soloist, and to the fact that the solo part would not be written out. I had to go through the same arguments with Sto-

kowski that I'd had with Koussevitzky, but at least this time there was a precedent.

I brought up Mozart. Mozart had done the same thing with the baritone solo "Non più andrai" in the first act finale of his "Marriage of Figaro" to keep the tune-thieves from swiping the melody before the opening night, I maintained.

Stokie laughed. "We have only union plagiarists here," he told me.

But he agreed to try rehearsing without a soloist. He'd tried the calvilux and Schoenberg and the movies. Why not this? Sure, I chimed in, they make Add-a-part records, don't they? All the parts but the one you sing or play. So why not?

The Second Concerto was even more of a success than the first. It was a fiery thing, but very broad too. The critics found similarities to the music of Sibelius in it, but I couldn't. It was like nothing I had ever heard before. It wasn't even like the First Concerto, except that it was just as utterly unplayable for any other violinist—and for any other violin.

Landau went through it like a man in a dream. He played as though the violin were dragging him through every stroke of the bow, and at the end of the final movement—this one had movements—he collapsed on the stage.

Three Carnegie Hall engagements in New York had to be postponed while Landau went for a rest. I went with him, of course. We tried Atlantic City, for, cold as it was, there was little likelihood of meeting people from the musical world. We played cards and fooled around with a couple of girls, but Landau only grew worse. His eyes shone with a feverish brilliance, and one of the girls insisted that he took cocaine. I knew better though.

He never slept. Every night during all the time we were there, he worked frenziedly on yet a third concerto, a "Concerto for Violin with Orchestral Obligato" he called it. I could just see every conductor in the country getting blue in the face with rage when he saw that inscription.

During the evenings we would walk on the frigid boardwalk when there

was nothing else to do, talking of anything but music, and least of all of that terrible violin. If it hadn't been that Landau was positively a goldmine for me, I would have advised him to destroy the violin.

I have blamed myself a thousand times since then for my greediness. I could have saved him then, I think. I'm sure I could have. But I was too interested in making money. The Devil always pays well, I guess. All you have to give him is your soul.

IT WAS about the middle of March, late one night, when I found that I couldn't sleep either. Certain that I would find Landau up and working, I went to his room and knocked. There was no answer. I went down to the hotel desk and asked them to call. I was worried. Thoughts of suicide mushroomed in my brain. Landau might kill himself just out of desperation, to get away from the violin.

"Mr. Landau?" said the clerk. "Oh, he's never in at this time of night. He always goes out, sir. He takes his violin with him."

I rushed up to my room and got a coat, and then set out in search of him with fear in my heart. There were the old legends of Paganini and his solitary expeditions into the night with his violin. There were worse things than suicide I remembered.

I followed the board-walk for nearly a mile, walking into the wind as I was somehow sure Landau had done. Finally, far ahead, I saw him out on the beach. He was playing, wildly, while the waves rolled up to his very feet and shone ominously black in the light of the full moon. There was a passion in Landau's playing such as I had never heard before. There was something of the wild roll of the ocean in it, and something else too, dark and slimy and unbearable, like the black ooze at the bottom of the sea.

As I came closer I suddenly realized that he was not alone. Standing before him, black-robed and with folded arms, was a giant figure of a man, surely seven feet tall. I wanted to approach them. There was no reason why I shouldn't. There are lots of

tall men, aren't there? Sure there are.

But I couldn't move. My legs were paralyzed by a fright that I could not explain. A choking, unnameable fear lashed at my nerves. There was something that kept repeating itself in the wild, thin strains of the violin. The tune was the key. I knew it was, but I couldn't think of its name for Landau wasn't playing that tune; he was just weaving it into the fabric of his unholy music.

And then I remembered; it was the Dance of Death! At that precise moment, in one of the frenzied movements that now accompanied all of Landau's playing, his face turned and caught the pale moonlight and I saw it.

There was terror, black and terrible, written there. I tore myself loose from my paralysis and ran toward him. As I stumbled out onto the sand I shouted.

"I say, Landau! What the devil are you doing out there?"

As I spoke, the stranger whirled to face me, and I caught the briefest glimpse of a pallid face and glowing black eyes, though I can't tell how I knew they were black. I ran toward them even faster, and Landau shrank back along the water's edge and then slumped to the sand.

I started to pick him up, saying: "Hey, you! Tall guy! Give me a hand, will you!"

When there was no answer, I looked around, the tall man was gone. There was no sign of him on the beach or up on the boardwalk, and though the receding tide had swept the shore soft and clean, the tall man had left no footprints in the sand.

Landau was out like a light. I picked up that damned fiddle, which he still held tightly clutched in his hand, and thrust it in its case. Then I dragged Landau and the fiddle back to the hotel.

That was the second time I'd had the Guarnerius in my hand. I wish now that I'd thrown it into the ocean. Oh, God! how I wish I'd smashed it and thrown it in the sea! But I didn't, and when next I had the opportunity to destroy it, it was too late, and besides, I muffed that chance, too.

WE PUT Landau in bed, the night-clerk and I. I gave some phoney excuse about my poor friend's unfortunate intoxication. I'm sure he didn't believe a word. But I didn't want him to call a doctor. I hoped that Landau would go from his faint into a normal sleep, and, indeed, when I saw him the next morning, he seemed more normal than at any time since he had bought that wretched fiddle.

I tried to find out what had happened the night before but when I opened the subject, such a look of stark terror came over his face that I stopped immediately.

The next day we returned to New York for the Carnegie Hall concerts. Again the major work on the program was to be one of Landau's incredible concerti. He had, by this time, completed the Third, and his first appearance featured that work. It was even more horrible, and more magnificent than either of the earlier two. But, as always, something went wrong.

At the end of the concert, the Saint-Saëns "Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso" was to have served as an encore for both soloist and orchestra. But, as the applause for the previous number subsided and Barbirolli raised his baton for the opening strains of the encore, I saw a sudden look of fear blanch Landau's face. He staggered violently, and then motioned to Barbirolli with his bow to stop.

The conductor, startled, paused for a moment. Then he raised his baton again. Landau leaped for him like a tiger and dragged down his raised arm. I was sitting in the third row, and I saw his lips move. He seemed to be arguing with the conductor.

Abruptly Barbirolli turned, bowed to the audience stiffly, and withdrew from the podium. Landau lifted his violin then, and held it with his chin while he tightened the strings and tightened them some more. I suddenly realized that all along he had been tuning his fiddle without getting an A from the woodwinds to guide him. He was glaring at the audience with hellish eyes that showed bloodshot and piggish against his chalky face. Then he began to play—Paganini's

Thirteenth Caprice, the Devil's Laughter.

It was like nothing that anyone in that hall had ever heard. Most of the great of music have played in Carnegie Hall in the last half-century, tearing the great echoes from its walls. But none of them, none of them I say, ever played or thought of playing as Landau did in that Caprice.

His bow tore at the strings, and I would have sworn that two broke and curled up at the fiddle's neck. But nothing stopped that wild, unholy laughter. The gleeful snarling of the Devil swept through the hall, congealing the hearts of every person there from the season-ticket stuffed-shirts, uneasy in their tight and gorgeous clothes, to the earnest little standees in the top gallery, clutching a program to sweaty extinction in their hands.

The music went on and on, growing wilder with each passing second . . . wilder and fiercer and more terrifying. Landau threw in passages that I knew weren't in the published score, but that fit as perfectly as if they were meant to go there. They probably were. The Devil's Laughter rose to its piercing climax, and then it stopped. Landau bowed feebly to the audience and staggered off the stage.

THE mad applause was still rocking the house when I found him out on the fire escape, smoking. He was standing there, the Guarnerius dangling in one hand, and the smoke curling up around his head. He seemed dazed by what had occurred. When I spoke to him he looked up at me slowly.

"It wouldn't let me," he muttered. "It wouldn't let me play anything else." His eyes were dull, like those of a hurt animal.

"Let me smash the damned thing," I said, and I reached for the fiddle.

Landau snatched it away. "No!" he shouted. "No, you fool! Don't you see? Can't you realize? My soul is in it! My soul!" He began to sob, while I stood there, helpless. Suddenly he ground out his cigarette on the railing, and swung around to face me. "No," he cried, "this can't be

the way it ends! It can't be! Tomorrow night I'll do the Beethoven. I'll do the Beethoven or you can smash this bloody fiddle into toothpicks!"

I didn't see him during the rehearsal the following day. I'm not even sure he attended it. Like Paganini, he had of late taken to not appearing at rehearsals. I was around town working on the publicity angle. Landau was to make a quick South American tour, to get the tail-end of the season, and I had to hustle.

With all the furore his concerts had raised, there still were people who had never heard of him, I found. Getting the steamship tickets I figured I'd get in a plug so the whole line could hear me.

"Landau is playing Beethoven at Carnegie Hall tonight," I told the ticket-agent, trying to make my voice sound casual.

"That's fine," he said. "I hope he wins."

Promptly at eight-thirty Landau was in his dressing-room. When I asked him where he had been that afternoon, he said, "At the Public Library."

And that's all I could get out of him. He went before the audience like a man in a dream. I saw his lips tighten as Barbirolli put the orchestra into the heavy rapping that begins the Beethoven Concerto. But the solo violin entered without a hitch, and I sat back relieved.

Landau swept through the Allegro and the great Larghetto with his most consummate artistry, and as the orchestra crashed into the Rondo finale his playing was surely that of the incredible Paganini. Each note of the sprightly little Rondo was perfection itself. The cadenza was his own—of course—and embellished with impossible glissandi. He tore into the finale like a maniac, and brought off that last da-da da-da-dee, da-da da-da-dee, da-da da-da-dee, dah! dah! with a verve that brought the audience to its feet, applauding their fool heads off.

Landau was triumphant as the applause roared through the Hall. His eyes were glowing with the gratification of an artist who receives only his just due. Then, suddenly, fear

overcame him as he raised the fiddle for an encore. He shrank back from something that no one could see, and fell to his knees. Then in a mad scramble he fled from the platform. I ran backstage and caught him as he got to the door of his dressing room. He thrust the Guarnerius at me.

"Take this thing and burn it!" he screamed.

He flung open the door and ran into his dressing room.

There was no one else in there when he went in. I can swear it.

H E SLAMMED the door and shot the bolt, and I put the violin down on the end table by the door where he had dropped the bow.

I began banging on the door and shouting.

"Landau! Let me in! What's come over you? What happened?!"

I kept banging, but there was no answer. That fiendish violin; I'd smash it I would! I turned to seize it, but it was gone. Down the hall I saw a kid running, fumbling to cover the violin and bow under his coat. I ran after him.

It wasn't the violin I was after, but the thought pierced my brain that I couldn't let some crazy kid wish a thing like that on himself. Some kid that was crazy about music and had come backstage for an autograph or an interview for his school paper. He must have seen the Guarnerius lying

there, and me with my back turned, and figured he'd snatch himself a fine fiddle.

Oh, Lord! Just a kid. The Devil's violin would get him, too! I hollered for him to stop, but he only ran faster, and finally he got away out a fire exit and disappeared in the departing crowd.

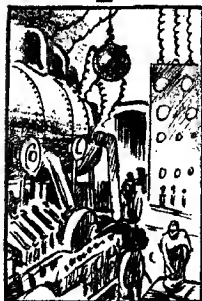
I turned back. Landau's door was still bolted. I kept thinking about that kid. That violin would break him as it had broken Landau. Maybe in a month, or a year, or twenty years or fifty, the fiddle would turn up again. An unknown violinist would flash like a meteor into fame. And then? What then? I began banging on Landau's door again, and suddenly it swung open in my face and a man came through and walked swiftly down the corridor and out of the building.

Behind him the room was empty.

The man was nearly seven feet tall. He wore a black cloak with a reddish lining that showed as he walked. His eyes were a burning coal-black, and a widow's peak of sleek dark hair reached down nearly to his eyebrows. As he walked you could hear a muted violin sliding precipitously down the scale, screaming.

I never saw Landau again. And neither did any man.

Some day I'll hear that violin again, and when I hear it I'll know what to do.



A NEW TUBBY STORY!

Alchemy becomes reality for the fat dreamer when he visits a wondrous world under the droning voice of a cyclotron lecturer in

Tubby—Atom Smasher

By RAY CUMMINGS

Coming Next Issue

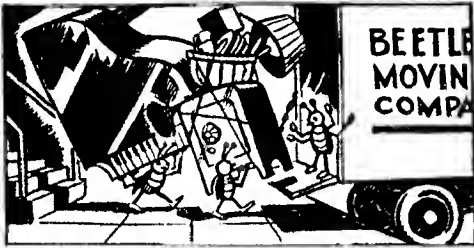
SCIENTIFACTS

INCREIBLE BUT TRUE

MIGHTY MIDGET

SOME time back in these pages we took up the popular fallacies of the reputed ages of various living things. Despite isolated reports to the contrary, man proves to be the longest-lived animal on this planet.

Today let us consider the relative strength of certain animate life forms. We stand amazed at the terrific strength of the elephant, for example. We look with awe on the immense power of the



gorilla. We think with a shudder of the ferocity of the now extinct saber-toothed tiger, of the carnivorous savagery of *Tyrannosaurus Rex*.

The elephant is a powerful creature, but figured at the rate of power per pound of weight, man outdoes the mighty pachyderm in muscular strength.

The king lizard and the saber-toothed tiger were formidable fighting machines, but considered by ringside weight the common house-cat is the most deadly four-footed fighting machine Nature has evolved.

And finally, the strongest living thing in the world, according to scientists, in proportion to its weight and size, is the lowly beetle, an insect which can neatly handle a package of more than eight hundred times its own weight.

ART TO ARMS

IN THIS global war in which all the old styles of strife seem to have been tossed into the ashcan, when man has

left the surface to carry his fight under the sea and high in the air, when science and industry and also the private citizen have been organized for total war, nothing has been overlooked. The latest reports from the home front show that the venerable art of sculpture has been drafted.

Due to the difference in the shape of the head of U. S. Army aviators it has been found difficult to fit factory-run oxygen masks to all fliers for high altitude flight. Thus, Sculptor G. W. Borkland, of Chicago, has been called in to create the sculptured heads of the seven basic types of U. S. fliers according to measurements supplied by Army air research and the technical work of the Field Museum.

This art work has immeasurably speeded up the production of masks and headgear that will fit the various types of heads in the Allied forces. Art, too, has gone to war!

Now if somebody would only come forward with the cranial measurements of a certain blockhead we could make a special mask and hat for a man who is really up in the air since the *luftkrieg* has got beyond his control.

GOING TO THE DOGS

THE prize this month for plastic oddities goes to Buster, the pet canine of a Chicago dental technician. You may remember the duck with the plastic upper bill, reported an issue or so ago? Buster goes the bird one better. He has been fitted with a complete upper plate of false teeth by his master of the type to make a Hollywood movie star jealous.

Buster, probably the first dog in the world to wear dentures, can massage a mean steak and all sorts of dog biscuits and rough food without missing a gulp

or swallowing his dental work. He just has to be a bit careful with his bone gnawing. Verily, the age of plastic marvels is upon us!

PLANET SHELLS

WHILE the telescope and the spectroscope have revealed the secret of the constituency of the farthest stars, conclusively proving them to be composed of some or all of the ninety-odd elements in our table of atomic weights,



there is still no accurate measure of how much of each element there is in a given star or planet.

Many years ago scientists figured that the larger planets of our own solar system had inner cores composed of heavy metals—iron, nickel, etc.—and an outer shell of matter with a density of less than that of water.

Now, on the heels of the development of magnesium as a light and durable, useful metal, comes the theory of Dr. C. L. Critchfield, of Harvard University, that the outer shell of such giants as Jupiter and Saturn may be composed of compressed hydrogen, hydrogen so compressed as to be in effect a metal.

If this is true, Nature has about reached the ultimate in light metals. The only step left is to borrow Captain Future's special matter integrating machine and make planets out of moonshine. Which is practically getting down to nothing. For, after hydrogen—the lightest element—comes sheer energy.

As for the weight of light, according to the Better Vision Institute, a ten-horsepower searchlight kept functioning for one hundred years would emit light to the weight of less than a hundredth part of an ounce.

AND NOW—THE ELECTRIC EYE

SINCE Fleming developed the first two-element radio tube back in 1905 the whole art of electrical engineering has gone into the throes of re-birth. Vacuum tubes have been created to take over a multitude of control jobs, from counting paper cartons and opening doors for lazy people to running steel mills. Photo-electric cells, to give the electric eye a more scientific name, have proved a boon to chemistry and industry alike.

There are already some four hundred different types of vacuum tubes on the market, each constructed for some specific purpose in far more widely varied fields than the mere bringing in of Sunday night's favorite radio program. And the latest development is the thyatron tube which bids fair to revolutionize the business of transmitting electric power.

Up to now it has been impossible to transmit direct high-voltage current. The thyatron tube promises to transmit direct current to industry in greater voltage at less cost than alternating current—and over the same transmission lines already in use.

Better hurry up and install that roof aerial. You may be receiving wireless power by tomorrow.

THERE AIN'T NO SECHI

TO CONTINUE our class in natural history, we present—Barylambda. This is not a new Walt Disney character. No. Barylambda lived in western Colorado in the late paleocene period—which was just before the beginning of the age of mammals—and he has fewer relatives than the horseshoe crab, which means practically none.

Barylambda is a sort of a nightmare to paleontologists. By all logic and rights he simply shouldn't have existed. There has been nothing remotely like him since, and if his almost completed skeleton weren't on display at the Field Museum of Chicago, scientists would likely deny his existence.

Barylambda was Nature's original Mr. Five by Five. He was about nine feet long, four feet wide and four feet high,

possessing a small head and a big tail of the kangaroo variety for utility. Utter lack of a kindred mammal since indicates that some cataclysm obliterated his species completely.

Evidently he must have been some strange specimen picked up on an alien world by the Futuremen.

GROWTH CHEMICALS

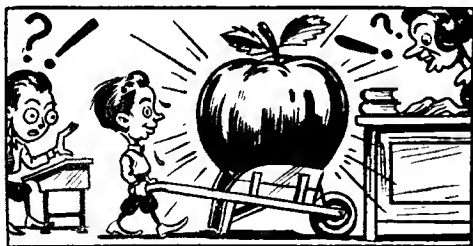
ACCORDING to the Polytechnical Institute of Brooklyn, a new group of chemicals allied to vitamins and hormones has been discovered. These are "thiosterols"—sulphur sterols—which may have a great influence on growth and certain gland stimulation.

On the other hand, Professor T. R. Alexander of the University of Miami has discovered that lack of the mineral salt, boron, causes wild growth in plant cells. Which leaves us in the quandary of not knowing whether to take thiosterols or just leave off a dash of boron.

Probably depends on what sort of timber you are, no doubt.

CHEMICAL EVOLUTION

THERE'S a newly-discovered use for the botanical herb known to Granddad and Grandma as "bloodroot." Sanguinaria, yielding a substance called sanguinarin, now rivals colchicine as an



evolution chemical. Colchicine has been used for some time to double the chromosomes of various plant seed, developing double fruit and flower in certain plants and producing "sports."

Experiments at the Department of Agriculture's station at Beltsville,

Maryland, shows that a fifth percent solution of sanguinarin produces approximately the same results as colchicine, with perhaps a smoother result as to effects on leaves of the plants tested.

This all sounds very good to us. In these days of food rationing how about growing double tomatoes and cantaloupes for the refrigerator?

EYE, EYE, SIR!

JUMPING from green groceries to continue our little perennial collection of stray optical facts, there now comes to the attention of science a new optometrical instrument which follows on the heels of contact lenses and the other bits of curious data we have been collecting on this shelf. This is no less than a lens which can change its focus in the same manner or effect as the living human eye. This is done by changing the curvature of its surfaces.

Thus, in testing eyes, instead of trying one set of lenses after another, the oculist simply turns a little knob to change the focusing power and reads the result on the accompanying little dial. How does it work, you would ask the inventor—Robert Graham?

Quite simple. Two cylindrical lenses of thin glass with liquid between them are the answer. Pressing them together along the perimeter changes the curvature, and therefore the focus. Tighten my eyes a couple of turns, Doctor; things are a bit blurry.

FOR PETE'S SAKE!

SCIENCE is indeed the magical geni. Nylon stockings from coal and air, rubber from gasoline and milkweed, alcohol and blood plasma from orange peels, plastics from all sorts of waste plant products—and now Norwegian experimenters have out-ersatzed the Nazis.

They have succeeded in producing bread flour, gas, artificial leather—and a passable wine—from peat.

Pete-Pete Has Good Reason for Not Remembering Anything — But He Forgets It When He Faces the Crisis of Space-Battle in THE AMNESIAC, by GEORGE EDWARDS—a Prize-Winning Story in our Contest for Amateurs, Coming Next Issue!



Pete had said the balloon would descend quicker if the caliph threw the rocks overboard.

GRIEF OF BAGDAD

By KELVIN KENT

Pete Manx Rides the Magic Carpet Back to an Ancient City—and It's No Caliphornia Stunt!

"NO," said Pete Manx. "Never again. This is my final word."

Dr. Horatio Mayhem smiled sadly, glancing about his famous laboratory at Plymouth University with its welter of apparatus ranging from huge dynamos to the most delicate detectors and most sensitive selectors, all subsidiary to the incredible Time Chair. He nodded.

"Yes, my boy. I understand your aversion to making any more trips into the historical Past. You have been a—um—lodestone for violent trouble..."

"Something always happens to me!" exclaimed Pete. "What if I sh'd get bumped off in the Past? Nix. No more o' that stuff for me."

"Quite right, my son. And yet—" Mayhem's benign tone and dreamy stare at the ceiling were pure ham. "I

would never have invited you here again, Pete, knowing it to be a place of strange memories, except that occasionally in our lives there arise demands that transcend all selfish personal considerations. Do you follow me?"

"No, but I smell something fishy."

"Tut, tut." Mayhem signaled surreptitiously to Professor Belleigh Aker, who waited beside the door to the office. Quickly Aker leaned over a portable phonograph, then flung open the door. A burst of martial music filled the lab, a flag unfurled in the doorway, and into the room marched a middle-aged man in officer's uniform.

"I give you," cried Aker, "Colonel Henry Crowell, U.S.A.!"

He paled as the significance of this elaborate act dawned on him. Mayhem and Aker were putting, on the pressure again and he could guess the reason. He wanted Army service, or any fighting for his country, but another hectic journey into the Past—huh-uh!

Colonel Crowell approached and gazed at Pete's undersized, though tough and wiry, figure.

"This is the man?" he asked incredulously.

Dr. Mayhem beamed.

"The most well-traveled man in world history, Colonel. Shrewd and able."

Pete stared at Mayhem suspiciously, like a turkey hearing the ax being whetted.

"Well," the Army man said, "I've heard some amazing things about you, Mr. Manx!"

Pete blushed modestly, and the colonel sat down.

"I won't kid you," the colonel said. "I came to ask you a favor in the interest of national defense. As you know, we face a grave crisis and no stone is being left unturned to strengthen our military position. Now, men of your cosmopolitanism know there are scientific secrets, valuable ones, lost in the past. The Mayans, the Lemurians, the builders of the pyramids—all show indications of scientific advancement which we can't match. Right?"

Pete's heart did a quick wing-over and spin.

"Yeah, but them guys never had any knowledge of military stuff that'd do us—"

"Ah-ah! Don't be too sure. There's one secret, if we can find it, that would make us masters of the air. Ever hear of the magic carpet?"

PETE had seen the Thief of Bagdad in the movies. He nodded.

"Of course," Crowell continued, "it may only be a fairy tale. But historical research has shown us that the wildest fairy tales and legends often had their basis in fact. Now, if some early oriental discovered how to defeat gravity think what it would mean to us to rediscover that secret. How easy it would be to defend our cities; we could suspend great platforms in the sky with the heaviest cannon on them. We could hover ten miles over the enemy and rain bombs down. The science of aviation would be revolutionized! You would be immortal, Mr. Manx!"

"I'm just about immortal now," Pete muttered with waning resistance. "Why pick on me? Anyone could make the trip."

Professor Aker broke in eagerly.

"Not so, Manx. You are the best fitted. As you've made so many Time trips, Dr. Mayhem has plotted with utmost accuracy your Time Potential, and can project you almost exactly wherever we wish. We couldn't do that with a stranger."

"Besides," added Mayhem, "it takes a man of wits and initiative like yourself to handle situations after he gets there."

This rank flattery shattered the remnants of Pete's resolve. He looked at the Time Chair, shuddering, and fixed his mind on the glories of patriotism.

"Okay," he sighed. "Shoot the jolt to me, dolt."

Quickly the preliminaries were completed. Power surged about the lab, shaking its very walls with muted dronings. Mayhem fiddled with dials and switches. Pete took his place in the Chair, one ear taking in Professor Aker's explanations to the curious Colonel Crowell.

"Our proven concept of Time is that

of a complete, coexistent circle, at the hub of which exists what we may call a Central Time Consciousness. Our apparatus releases the mind from the artificial barriers confining it to the present. Once within the Central Time Consciousness, it comes within the influence of a sort of psychic centrifuge, and is whirled out again into the mind of a person in the pre-selected era. Quite simple, as you can readily see . . ."

The Colonel seemed a little dazed.

"The Chair, of course, ties the mind immutably to its body in the Present, so the Traveler never gets beyond our control or lost in Time."

Aker surreptitiously mopped his face with relief, and was spied so doing by Pete. The latter started up.

"Hey! I been framed! I ain't the only one with experience in this thing! What about Aker? He's able to make the trip—"

Hastily Aker reached past Mayhem toward the switch.

"Six weeks, Pete!"

Zung-g-g! There was a crackling, and quite suddenly the body of Pete Manx became revoltingly corpse-like. Only the most subtle instruments could have detected life therein. For the tenth fantastic time, Pete Manx was suffering with amps in his pants.

HIS first impression was of an overpowering odor—a combination of unwashed people, goats, and dogs, plus the sharpness of many spices, with a dash of putrescence from the quaintly oriental sewage disposal system. It was not altogether unpleasant.

Conquering a touch of nausea, Pete looked about him. He was apparently standing in the hot sunlight on the main street of ancient Bagdad. The uproar was terrific. Children fought and played shrilly in the streets. Hawkers in the bazaars shouted their wares. Thieves and cut-purses operated brazenly, resulting in many a wild race with indignant citizens chasing the criminals in vain.

Pete sighed at this display of crudity; he always preferred his crime on the subtle side. He glanced at his clothing to judge if he were rich or

poor, and to decide whether he would be able to live in quietness while pursuing his quest of the magic carpet.

He was dressed as most of the other inhabitants—loose, wide trousers, cotton *kami* from neck to ankles and a sash round the waist, red leather slippers. A turban completed the costume. A leather purse yielded a few odd coins, nothing more. Pete sighed. Probably he was a worthless lout again. How monotonous.

A voice caught his ear with a Persian equivalent of "Oh, nuts!"

A boy in his late teens squatted in the shade of a wall, looking disgustedly at an empty brass bottle. Pete had, on occasion, looked disconsolately at at empty bottles, but not at that age.

"What's cookin', bud?" he asked.

The boy stared.

"I do not cook, master. I am the victim of a cheat of a magician who sold me this bottle, which had the seal of Solomon, son of David, on whom be peace."

"How's that, chum?"

"He vowed that if one maketh certain motions and pronounceth certain words, a genie will appear from the bottle to do one's bidding. But nothing hath occurred. I have been defrauded."

Pete leaned over and patted him on the back.

"Kid, you don't realize it, but more terrific magic than that has just been pulled off under your nose."

The lad, was quick on the uptake.

"Then thou art the genie?" he asked eagerly. "Whence comest thou?"

"From very distant lands, pal," Pete swaggered, "that ain't even been discovered yet. In fact, I won't even be born for about eighteen centuries. That's me, the genie with the light brown hair. Ha, ha!"

The youth failed to crack a smile. "What great magic!" he whispered in awe. "If thou'rt the genie, bring me great wealth at once."

Pete grinned. He was enjoying himself kidding this yokel.

"That takes time, bud. Us genies don't produce the geetus from thin air. We fix things so it seems to come natural-like. Be patient."

Pete's agile brain was already at

work. He would need a native, possibly, to help him get around with his inquiries about the flying carpet. Why not this credulous lad, who already had a proper appreciation of Pete Manx's importance in the scheme of things?

"Stick with me, chum, an' you'll wear diamonds. What's yer name?"

"Ahmedalhazred."

"I'll call you Sabu. And you can call me—" Pete paused; naturally he didn't know the name of the man whose body he was temporarily usurping. "Oh, just call me Bo."

"As thou wishest, O Bo. What dost thou plan first?"

"As a matter o' fact, I come here on a little personal business. Look. Is there a guy around here who operates a magic carpet?"

SABU stared blankly; he had never heard of so wondrous a thing.

"It's a flying carpet." Pete elaborated. "Goes through the air like a Spitfire—I mean just like a bird. Maybe you seen it zooming by, huh?"

Sabu registered bafflement. Pete shrugged in disgust. If the boy couldn't help, he would just make some inquiries till he found someone who could. Discreet inquiries of course, not open advertising, else he might arouse competition for the secret knowledge.

With Sabu trailing behind still clutching his worthless magic bottle, Pete began his questioning. Weavers, tent-makers, coppersmiths, merchants, wine-sellers—all the businessmen in several blocks along the crooked thoroughfare were interviewed. Not one had so much as heard of the aerial carpet, and many looked rather queerly at the none too affluent stranger who asked crazy questions.

Twice Pete spoke to petty chisellers who promised, with secretive glances, that for a sum of money they would make contact with mysterious, informed personages who couldn't be reached at the moment, and would Bo meet them here tomorrow? Pete laughed scornfully at such obvious punks.

One thing seemed quite clear; the

existence of the flying carpet was not commonly known. Perhaps the inventor was keeping it a secret. Pete pondered. It was obvious that he must contrive to make the inventor come to him, rather than continue an interminable and probably unsuccessful search. How? By offering some sort of profit.

Pete hunkered down in an alley and began to think furiously. Sabu watched, awe-stricken. Pete might start a war, in which the owner of a flying carpet could make a fortune. But military experiences at the siege of Troy weren't exactly unqualified successes. Besides, people were always getting hurt in wars. No, the war idea was not so good.

Finally Pete came to the perfect solution of his problem. Vaudeville! Introduce the delights of vaudeville to these Persians, offer big money for new and original acts, and indubitably the magic carpeteer would learn of his big chance to cash in. He would come as inevitably as flies to honey.

Once he had the inventor located, Pete had no doubt of his ability to wheedle, bribe, steal, or slug the secret of the carpet from its owner.

"Okay!" he cried, jumping up. "I got it!"

Sabu's eyes widened.

"Hath aught been revealed to thee in a vision, O Bo?"

"Yeah, yeah. A vision. All I need now is a theatre. I mean, d'you know of a place I can rent a big building?"

Sabu thought, then suggested the home of a recently deceased wealthy jewel trader. His harem had been disbanded by his sole heir, a spinster sister, and now the place stood practically empty. Apart from the mosque, it was the most nearly suitable place in Bagdad that the lad could think of.

WITHIN the hour Pete presented himself to the lady in question. Behind her veil she was homely enough to have gotten a job in any dairy souring the cream, but this type was all the easier for Pete's *savoir faire*. Glib-tongued, suave, he knocked her off balance with rank flattery, then floored her with his fast-

talking business proposition.

"Babe," he said, "it's the birth of vaudeville, and don't ask me why. It'll sweep the country, and I'm the guy what can do it. We'll take this barn o' yours—it ain't earnin' you a dime, I mean a *kran*, and what d'you want with such a big joint, anyway?—and turn it into a real investment. You'll be known throughout the Orient as a benign patroness of the Arts.

"Of course, I realize the financial gain involved doesn't interest you so much, so we'll just sign for a nominal ten per cent of the net profits. By coincidence I have a contract right with me, just a little one-year lease with options and permission to make alterations." Pete whipped out parchment and quill smoothly. "Right here, if you please. On the dotted line . . ."

A flirtatious glance, a sly squeeze of the hand, and she was Pete's, body and soul. More to the point, so was her property.

An architect came next, and he was induced to remodel the building to Pete's specifications, in return for another ten per cent of the net, if any.

Pete opened his office in one corner of the new theatre with the sign, "Theatrical Agency. Talent Wanted," hung in the window. He also plastered Bagdad with throw-sheets asking for entertainers, promising glittering rewards for those who could qualify. Then he sat back to await prosperity.

Prosperity, unfortunately, was reluctant to be wooed by this brash stranger. Entertainers came, it is true, but they were all alike. They were girls who danced at banquets and stag parties; to the last female, the only thing they could do was the Dance of the Seven Veils.

"That's okay as far as it goes," Pete exclaimed to Sabu in disgust, "but you can't make a vaudeville show outa one act, can you?"

"I know not, O Bo."

So Pete took the seven best hoofers, made a chorus, and taught them some of the simpler tap routines he had once known many centuries in the future. He named the act Dance of the Forty-nine Veils.

"It's plain to see," he observed, "that I gotta be the director of this show as well as the producer."

Sabu's bottle gave Manx his first idea. Aided by a coppersmith, he fashioned one of those trick stage jugs which appear to empty themselves of water time after time. Pete, in his varied career, had once stooged for a rather good magician. Naturally he had picked up a good many of the master's tricks, and now they came in good stead.

He worked out a magic act for himself, nothing elaborate but sufficiently clever to amaze the local yokels. There were some simple card tricks, a many-pocketed coat with the usual assortment of eggs, coins, and rabbits, and the act climaxed by sawing Sabu in half. The equipment was paid for by another promise of ten per cent of the profits.

NEXT Pete scouted around for musicians. There were a few street singers and beggars strumming on three-stringed mandolins, and he also found two down-at-heel fellows who played on a flute-like instrument. The music was weird, sing-song stuff, like Raymond Scott a little off key.

He whipped together an octet of strings and woodwinds, with a percussion section featuring a home-made drum. Not at all satisfied with the current taste in music, Pete simply wrote his own—three pieces, all that he could remember offhand: Beat Me, Daddy, Eight to the Bar, Boogly Woogly Piggy, and a rough rendering of Glenn Miller's arrangement of the Volga Boatman.

By the time he had thoroughly rehearsed his orchestra, one of the girls had blossomed forth with real talent, and was elevated to the position of specialty artiste. Stalling for time, Pete promised the cast another ten per cent if they would be patient.

"It's tough, kid," he sighed to the awed Sabu. "Sometimes people don't savvy the genius of a true promoter."

When the show finally premiered, however, Pete considered his troubles practically over. It was a smash hit. Bo's Bagdad Burleycue (Come One—Come All! Plenty of Persian Pret-

ties!) played to S. R. O. before the first week was out. Money poured in so fast Sabu, promoted to theater manager, became dizzy trying to keep accounts.

Pete, of course, was preoccupied with his main purpose, trying to locate the elusive roving rug. By twos and threes, then by dozens and finally by the hundreds, hopeful entertainers thronged Pete's offices trying to persuade the Great Man that they were born vaudevillians. Jugglers, minstrels, acrobats, itinerant storytellers, and others swarmed about like a plague.

Pete trained two assistants to catch the acts, which were monotonously alike and usually lousy. All he wanted to know was—had any of them ever heard of a guy with a flying carpet? None had.

Presently another difficulty arose. Pete was not surprised; he had yet to travel in Time without something going amiss. Sabu came to him breathlessly one morning with a message.

"O Bo," he gasped, "the mighty Ali Ben Mahmoud demands thy presence!"

Pete sighed.

"Who's this Ben? Why don't he see me here?"

"Ali Ben Mahmoud, O Bo, is the caliph of Bagdad." Sabu lowered his voice fearfully. "A very wicked caliph, O Bo, whose people groan beneath unjust taxes and walk in terror of his displeasure."

Pete smiled cynically.

"Crooked politics, hey? What's he want?"

"I surmise that thou hast incurred his displeasure with thy vaudeville. It angers the caliph when another maketh more money than he."

Pete glanced down at his tailor-made silks, glittering with jewels. He smiled with some vanity.

"We are in the dough," he said complacently. "Well, let's put this small-time politician in his place."

Sabu hesitated.

"It would be better, O Bo, wert thou a man of high social estate. Hast thou a title in that far land whence thou come?"

"I was a corporal in C.M.T.C. once.

I guess nobody will kick if I promote myself. From now on you can call me major."

"Excellent, O Major Bo. It will impress the caliph. Follow me."

THE palace to which Sabu led Pete was an ornate structure of the Persian hybrid architecture of domes and minarets and semicircular arches. Ali Ben Mahmoud, however, though pretentious in a fat and bejeweled way, was anything but hybrid. He was pure, unadulterated chiseler from turban to sandals. Pete had known too many sharpshooters to make any mistake about this one.

He bowed low, tipping his turban at a rakish angle.

"Major Bo, at your service, Caliph. What's cookin'?"

Ali Ben gave the flippant visitor a basilisk stare, while pawing through an acre of surrounding food for a chop to gnaw on.

"It hath come to my ears," he said, "that thou seekest a magic carpet."

"Yeah, Ben. Somewhere around here a guy has invented a flying rug. I'm tryin' to locate it."

"If there be any such marvel in Bagdad, it belongeth to me."

Ali Ben and Pete exchanged a long look. Pete swallowed. This was what he had feared, tough competition that he would have trouble in bucking.

"Sure, Ben, if I get it. If I find the thing, I'll bring it right around. All I want is a few words with the inventor, anyway."

"Not 'if,' O Major. Thou seemest confident of the existence of such a magic carpet. If 'tis not brought to me forthwith, I shall suspect treachery. That would be unfortunate." He drew one fat finger playfully across his throat, but Pete could see he was not joking.

Pete began to sweat.

"Gimme time, Ben. Say, four weeks, huh? I oughtta locate it by then." He smothered a smile when the caliph acquiesced. If he failed, inside of four weeks he would be safely back in the twentieth century.

Ali Ben Mahmoud tossed a ruined drumstick aside, replete.

"Lest you misunderstand, Major Bo,

I have imposed a new tax. Fifty *tomans* a day for all who promote entertaining in theaters."

Pete shrugged. That was chicken-feed. But the caliph continued:

"Shrug not, O Bo. This tax increaseth each day by fifty *tomans*, thus to insure thy most earnest efforts in the search for the flying carpet." He smiled benignly. "Tax defaulters, of course—" He again made the cute little throat-cutting gesture.

Pete gulped; they evidently played for keeps in Bagdad.

"Okay, Ali, if that's the way you want it. I'll do my best." Where-with he bowed himself out of The Presence, muttering angrily.

Back at his office, Pete realized things would have to hum. In ten days that mounting tax would be more than his profits could handle.

At once he began to organize road-shows. The beauty of the scheme was that, besides increasing revenue, it would send his agents to all parts of the kingdom and multiply his chances of catching the eye and ear of the cagey magic carpet inventor. These Major Bo's Units were whipped together and sent out by caravan at the rate of one a day.

By the end of a fortnight, Pete's touring tyros were laying them in the aisles all over the country. But his agents, though they returned with tales of success and bags of gold, brought not a word of the traveling tapestry.

STALLING for more time, Pete cast about for more sources of revenue. He found that his boogie-woogie was sweeping the country, being played and sung from public house to harem. Promptly he organized the Fraternal Order of Loyal Song Composers and Publishers, consisting of himself and Sabu.

With the help of the caliph, whose coffers were beginning to creak with the mounting tax collections on Bo's vaudeville, a law was hurriedly passed which forbade anyone so much as to hum a FOOLSCAP tune without first buying a license to do so. A dictatorship has its points, Pete mused.

Sabu was horrified with this alliance

with Evil, despite the increased income. Pete tried to pass it off nonchalantly with the famous ward-heeler political aphorism, "If you can't lick 'em, then join 'em."

But Bo had his worries, and they increased geometrically. Ali Ben Mahmoud wanted the secret of the flying carpet. He was also jealous of the ability of the upstart tycoon, Major Bo, and determined to smash him. He could have Bo executed, of course, but Bo was now a very popular man in the kingdom; repercussions might repercuss. Besides, there was more in it for the caliph by taxing the financial genius to ruin.

Ali Ben watched Pete's frantic squirmings with dispassionate detachment, to see just how much the man could really earn before the rising tax rate caught up with him.

There was no real escape; Pete knew that. It was a race against time. He had to pyramid his enterprises and expand them so as to hold out till Dr. Mayhem rescued him. FOOLSCAP enabled him to meet the racket payments for several more days, but a week yet remained.

His wits had never worked more smoothly. Already he had introduced the use of cosmetics and exotic hairdos on his chorus girls. The situation was ripe for public exploitation. Desperately he rounded up some artists, instructed them hurriedly in the delicate art of make-up, and opened the *Chez Bo*—Coiffures, Cosmetiques; "Be Beautified By Bo."

As all big-time beauty parlors, the *Chez Bo* was a colossal success. Bagdad babes were pretty awful beneath their veils, and there was plenty of room for lipstick, rouge, face creams, and what-not. Unfortunately, though the returns still kept the caliph's tax collectors at bay, there was no news of the restless rug.

As doom approached with each hour, Pete surveyed his financial empire with horror. The ramifications of Bo's entertainment enterprises and their subsidiaries were almost endless. When the crash came, it would make the debacle of Ivar Kreuger, the Match King, look like a pitiful imitation by comparison.

Inevitably, of course. The Day arrived. The tax mounted too high to be met; Pete sent the leering collector home empty-handed. Within an hour the street resounded with the tramp of hooves as the Camel Police rode up to arrest him.

"Sabu," said Pete sadly, "this is the end. We ain't found that magic carpet so the joint is pinched. You better scram while the scrammin' is good, kid. Take your liquid assets and lam till the heat's off."

Sabu got the general drift of the genie's strange tongue. Bo, alas, was about to return to the magic bottle, never to appear again, perhaps. But Sabu was loyal. Bo had promised him great wealth, and had kept that promise; therefore Sabu would not desert him.

Pete started to argue the lad into fleeing at once. For once he had outsmarted himself, having calculated things too fine. Before he had finished talking, and just as the cops pushed in, the world began to slip out of focus, slantwise, in the familiar distortion that carried the Time Traveler back home again . . .

Zung-g-g!

PETE heaved to his feet, one hand indelicately over his mouth. He made gobbling noises. Professor Aker trotted into the deserted lab.

"Ah, there, Manx!" he said anxiously. "Nausea? We didn't expect you for an hour or so yet. Was the journey successful?"

Pete flung himself onto a couch, quickly readjusting himself to his own world. He listened impatiently to Aker's questions.

"Quiet!" he interrupted finally. "There ain't no magic carpet, an' that's that. Now keep still and lemme think."

Minutes passed, and Aker began to fidget in alarm. A speechless and pensive Pete was a strange phenomenon, indeed.

"Anything wrong, Manx?" He ventured.

"Plenty." Pete grunted. "There's a nice kid back there in Bagdad who's in a terrific jam 'cause o' me. An' the guy whose body I took over—boy!

Is he in trouble! Look, Prof, answer me this one question."

He posed his problem, received a puzzled but very accurate reply.

"Okay, Prof. I gotta go back there in a coupla days. Make it four. Can you work the Time Chair without Mayhem?"

"Of course, my dear fellow." He nodded and stared keenly at Manx, realizing there were hidden depths in the tough little man's character. For him to return deliberately into whatever hornet's nest he had inevitably stirred up, just to help a boy who was now dust centuries old—that took courage.

"You realize that whereas we can send you back to about the same time, we couldn't possibly say as to whose mind you will enter."

"That's okay," Pete agreed. "It couldn't be any worse'n it was when I left." He grimly strode to the Time Chair once more, watched Professor Aker adjust the delicately sensitive selectors. "Let 'er rip!"

Zung-g-g!

Again the blinding sunlight beat down upon Pete Manx, but this time the clamor of Bagdad was gone. Instead was a whispering silence, and Pete stared around wonderingly at a desert.

He was dressed in fine silks again, but with burnoose instead of turban. He sat astride a magnificent black horse, a veritable Whirlaway. Behind him, obviously awaiting his command, was a hard-bitten crew of some three dozen well-armed fighting men.

It was evident he was now a nomad, leader of a band of desert raiders. Ahead lay the glory that was Bagdad, wavering in the heat waves. His course was plain. He speared a brown, muscular arm toward the distant city.

"Thar's where we're a-headin'. Dig in them spurs, cowboys!"

The bandits yelled fierce approval.

"Our sheikh Hassan speaks mighty words! Onward!" The riders thundered across the desert.

When they came to a dusty halt beneath the walls of Bagdad, the guard of the city gates stared suspiciously as Pete rode up.

"What dost thou wish?" he wanted

to know. "Open up!" Pete cried imperiously.

"Open! Huh! Says who?"

"Open, sez me!" retorted Pete. "Special envoy to Ali Ben Mahmoud!"

The bluff worked. The guard looked around uncertainly, then opened the gates to allow Pete and his men to pass through. Little did Pete realize that the effect of his strange command was to be told and retold through the bazaars and, distorted by time, become a legendary password—Open Sesame.

THE same manner did not open the gates of the caliph's residence, but an added sentence did the trick.

"Tell Ali I'm the inventor of the magic carpet," he announced.

A messenger vanished into the mansion, returned pop eyed.

"The stranger is permitted to enter forthwith," he said. "Alone."

Pete grinned insolently and ordered his whole gang to follow. They did, right into the presence of Ali Ben Mahmoud. As usual, the caliph was eating, popping grapes into his mouth and spitting out the seeds like a machine-gunner. Poker-faced he stared at the wild-looking delegation.

"Thou'rt the maker of the flying carpet?"

Pete nodded.

"That's me. And I'll make one for you right in your courtyard, provided you'll agree to one condition."

Ali turned his attention to some peers.

"So?"

"You probably got a guy named Major Bo and a kid named Sabu in the jug. They ain't done nothin' wrong. Free 'em and the carpet's yours."

Ali downed a goblet of wine.

"I could make thee divulge thy secret," he observed, "without concessions on my part."

Pete bared his teeth confidently, looked around at his men. He gloried in a sense of power. The situation was delicately balanced. He did not have sufficient strength, of course, to seize the caliph and whip his army; out-and-out warfare, while Ali Ben was still in the picture, could end only in disaster for Pete. However, he could

make a lot of trouble, and he figured that rather than risk his fat hide, the caliph would gladly make the small concession asked.

The release of Bo and Sabu was important before Pete could set his plan in motion; else he might be whisked back to his own time before rescuing the lad.

"Maybe," he allowed, "but Ali Ben Mahmoud, on whom be peace, is all-wise. You realize you can have the secret without trouble. Why waste time and blood?" He glanced around at Ali's personal guards.

Ali pecked at some sweetmeats, cogitating. Then he clapped his hands.

"Bring Bo and the lad with the bottle," he ordered.

All hands stood around in an armed truce, waiting alertly till two battered figures were brought in. Major Bo was a wreck of a man whose mind was on the verge of collapse. Sabu had been explaining to him all that he had done during the past weeks, none of which he understood. The boy was in better shape, though plainly despairing.

Pete grinned at him.

"Hey, kid, been rubbing that bottle again?"

Sabu stared at Hassan, still clutching the brass bottle.

"Why, O Sheikh?"

"Because the genie's back again. Only it's in me this time, see?"

Hope flared in Sabu's eyes.

"Ai! Thou'lt save me and Major Bo?"

"Yep. You two are free, only stick around with me a while. And promise never to rub that bottle again. It's made a mess o' trouble."

"Enough of this strange talk," the caliph interrupted. "I understand it not. Besides, where is the magic carpet, as promised?"

"I'll get busy on it right away, Ali. Just get me a flock o' weavers and a coppersmith."

WORKING day and night without benefit of union contract, the weavers made a tremendous silken tapestry that covered nearly the entire courtyard, shaped like a five-pointed star.

They also made a gigantic harness and a wicker basket. As the use of varnish dates back to great antiquity, Pete easily made some. He melted sandarac in warm oil and applied the stuff warm. By afternoon of the second day the coat of varnish was dry. Across the center of the whole thing Pete splashed the cabalistic symbol: P-38.

The caliph, no longer blandly unemotional, inspected the mystic figures with ill-concealed superstition.

"This is the magic carpet?" he demanded.

"Yeah, man. Fastest thing that flies. An' you're gonna be the first to ride on it!"

Ali Ben nearly strangled on a forgotten mouthful of fruit. But, putting on a bold front, he sat cross-legged on the carpet and commanded it to fly. Pete hurriedly explained it wasn't quite ready yet.

Meantime Pete had instructed his coppersmith to make two slender bits of copper tubing, each fifteen inches long, and another shorter cylinder six inches long and three in diameter. This was supported by twin tripods, and filled with iron filings.

"Now if you'll gimme that brass bottle, kid," he said to Sabu, "I'll make with another genie pretty soon."

"Bismallah! A brother genie, lord?" Sabu quivered in fearful delight.

"You said it." Pete filled the bottle partially with water, then joined bottle and cylinder with one copper tube, while the other tube led away from the cylinder.

That evening he climbed a tower, with the caliph watching narrowly, and scanned the countryside. The sky was clear, the horizon sharp in the sunset. Pete shook his head and came down.

"The—er—signs and portents ain't just right. Tomorrow, maybe."

Next morning he went through the same ritual with the same result. The caliph began to get restive. Fortunately, on the evening of the third day, Pete found the horizon obscured by low-lying dust. Sandstorm.

Pete returned grinning.

"Tomorrow ayem's the big moment, Ali. Get lots o' sleep tonight." Then

he added to his workmen, "You know your instructions; get busy. I'll fire up the boiler department."

The weavers in puzzlement drew up the corners of the five-pointed silken blanket, and sewed the edges together, leaving a small hole. Into this Pete fastened a hollow reed with a crude flap valve inside. The seams were hastily varnished.

"May leak a bit," he said, just as though there was a single soul in Bagdad with the faintest idea of what he was talking about, "but not much."

Turning to his bottle-and-cylinder contraption, he built small, hot fires beneath each. Presently the water began to boil, and the steam passed from the bottle over the iron filings.

"Y'see," Pete elaborated to Sabu, "with steam, iron brought to a red heat interacts vigorously, according to Prof. Aker. The oxygen in the steam combines with the iron and makes iron oxide. What's left is hydrogen." With which he plugged the end tube into the reed leading into the now sack-like magic carpet.

ALL through the night Sabu re-filled the brass bottle as fast as it was emptied; more and more hydrogen hissed into the balloon. At first sign of its uneasy stirrings, weavers and coppersmith fled screaming. Only Pete's warriors had the courage to stay and watch the big gas-bag finally rise and hang, tugging mightily, against the night sky. Pete had foresightedly thrown harness and attached basket over the balloon before it rose. The whole thing was tethered to Ali's fountain.

By dawn the windstorm hit hard, but behind Bagdad's sheltering walls little of it was felt. Ali Ben Mahmoud gave it not a thought as he gaped at the monster which had been born in his garden overnight.

Pete bowed with a flourish.

"The magic carpet, O Lord, awaiting its brave passenger, the courageous Ali Ben Mahmoud."

The balloon wavering above the caliph's walls had attracted quite a crowd, and Pete had discreetly spread word of how the grave caliph was to ride the rug that morning. A half-

hearted yell arose as Ali was spied through the gates. Thus, with Pete having neatly put the pressure on him, the caliph was obliged to go through with it.

Ali stepped into the basket.

"Just command it to rise," Pete said, "and up she'll go. Command it to descend, an' see what happens. If you wish to descend faster, throw out the rocks I put in there."

"Arise, o magic carpet," Ali quavered to the bulbous giant.

Pete's scimitar severed the tether. The bag rose and was promptly caught by the wind raging above Bagdad's walls. It shuddered, swooped, and soared away. Ali Ben Mahmoud was last heard screaming at the carpet to descend, frantically bombarding the city's roofs as he tossed out the bal-last.

In three minutes Ali had passed from view, and the populace was already festively expressing its heartfelt joy.

"Well, that's that," said Pete. "I hereby proclaim Sabu the new popular caliph of Bagdad. Me an' my—er—retainers will be your advisers in a gentlemanly sort o' way. Always be a good ruler, kid. The people already like you an' Major Bo. So just keep taxes low, encourage trade, put down crime, be merciful. Now my time's about up. This is the genie signing off, kid. So long—"

Sabu's face was a mixture of bewilderment, pride, and sorrow at the departure of the mightiest of all genies, indeed.

Zung-g-g!

The lab at P. U. whirled once and came to a gentle stop. Pete sighed with relief and stepped from the Time Chair to greet Professor Aker, Dr. Mayhem, and Colonel Crowell. Crowell scowled.

"Professor Aker tells me you have failed in your solemn mission."

"Oh, I dunno. It's a fact there wasn't no magic carpet, till I invented it." Pete passed over this hastily. "But it wouldn't interest the Army. However, I did figure out a way to get rid of Hitler. It worked swell in ancient Bagdad. I pulled a *coup d'etat*."

"*Coup d'etat!*" The colonel raised his eyes to heaven. Ice clung to his words. "Gentlemen, I am sorry to have wasted your time and mine in this fruitless endeavor. Even if the whole thing has not been a gigantic hoax, it is obvious that the scope of your invention has been greatly exaggerated!"

"I done my best to help," said Pete plaintively.

COLONEL CROWELL jerked his cap in irritation.

"The War Department," he announced, "is not going to like my report on this episode. Good-day!" The door slammed behind him.

The two savants stared at each other angrily.

"How," inquired Dr. Mayhem, "do you like that? We propagandize Manx into making the trip, do our best to aid national defense, and what thanks do we get? I've a notion to send Colonel Stimson a bill for the power we used!"

"Nix. I'm jinxed enough as it is," Pete moaned. "You old duffers needn't worry; you're too old to fight, but I want to and they've turned me down just because I'm over thirty-seven. And me with military experience."

Aker snorted derisively.

"What military experience?"

"Artillery, that's what. I got a special aptitude for a highly specialized job."

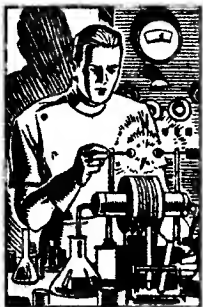
"Such as what?"

"I useta earn ten bucks a shot at Casey's Carnival," Pete sighed. "I was the Human Cannonball!"

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WONDERS OF WAR

The Role of Science in Combat on All Fronts



SEVENTY-FIVETTE—In a recently patented invention, Ray R. McCrumb of Lansing, Michigan, has ingeniously applied the famous recoil principle of the French 75-millimeter field gun to small arms. Current semi-automatic and automatic rifles and pistols use coil springs to take up part of the energy of the recoil and utilize it to reload the chamber and close the breech. In Mr. McCrumb's invention, as in the seventy-five, the recoil compresses the air in a pneumatic cylinder under the barrel, and the energy generated by the compressed air does the reloading work.

FAN MY BROW—The best face saving device since the days of the Japanese Samurai is the product of inventor Alfred Mendel of New York City. Aware that only the face of the well intrenched soldier is exposed to enemy gunfire, he has devised an affair like a folding fan which is attached to the upper part of the rifle butt. It can be expanded to form a face shield complete with slit openings through which its user can sight his weapon.

THIS WILL SEND THEM—A perennial problem in artillery is the difficulty of getting the powder charge to burn in the right direction. Cannon powder "grains" are often about the size and shape of whole shotgun shells, and they must burn relatively slowly to give the projectile as much "follow-through" as possible as it moves from breech to muzzle. Ignited from the breech, the rear end of the charge burns first, often blowing half consumed grains out of the gun with the shell.

To conquer this problem, William P. Maroney of Jersey City, New Jersey, has patented a new type of firing mechanism. In Maroney's scheme, the firing pin is not located in its customary spot in the breech plug, but is moved forward onto the gun barrel itself, near the forward end of the powder chamber. He also distributes a layer of quick-burning powder around to distribute the flash as rapidly as possible and make the powder burn as evenly and uniformly as possible.

WHOOPS, DEARIE—Parachutes are now caught up in the Second Empire revival, and when a flyer hits the silk, he'll be hitting it modishly if Richard H. Hart of New Orleans has his way. For better chute maneu-

verability, he has added a flounce around part of the periphery with a vent so that the pilot can let more or less air escape from either side of the chute he wishes, can thus improve his control of drift in the air. Pardon our bustle!

NEW HORIZONS—One of the worst features of tank fighting is that, in the heat of battle, the men inside can see little of what's going on around them, their vision being limited to the range of tiny slits. To overcome this handicap, Lieutenant Colonel David J. Crawford, A.U.S., has developed a wide-angle periscope with slanting mirrors at top and bottom wide enough to permit the tank commander to use both eyes and cover the horizon.

The upper mirror, exposed to enemy fire, can be quickly, safely and easily replaced. And at one side is a small telescope with aiming cross hairs. By fixing this on any target that offers and bringing his guns into alignment, the officer can open fire with greater speed and accuracy than has hitherto been the case.

THOSE RUSSIANS AGAIN—This time Soviet Russia, not satisfied with walloping the Wehrmacht all over the eastern hemisphere, has answered a shortage of dyestuffs by growing colored cotton and eliminating dyeing entirely. Soviet plant geneticists have discovered a way to grow black cotton which, combined with white, reddish or green cottons already known, can make a cloth of almost any hue desired. After the war, zoot suit addicts will be able to go out in the fields and pick themselves a set of threads instead of visiting a tailoring establishment.

PARDON MY GLOVE—It's not air conditioned. But it soon will be, thanks to the visit of a Westinghouse nurse to a beauty parlor. If an air blower could cool her pate while getting a permanent, she reasoned, why not air cool the gloves used by workers who handle hot objects. The result is a new type of asbestos gauntlet complete with low-pressure air hose, which banishes the possibility of burns. It already promises to be a godsend in war industry and may prove even more useful in the fighting forces.



TWO-TIMING MAN

By THAEDRA ALDEN

Peter Brown's Wife Wasn't a Very Sympathetic Listener When He Tried to Explain Why He Failed to Come Home After His Trip into the Future!



AT HEART I'm really a simple sort of person—honest, faithful, dependable and pretty much even tempered. At least I was that way before I answered that accursed ad of Prof. Knotts. It messed up not only my own life, but those of two very charming young ladies, each living in a different time. Yes, I can remember that ad now:

WANTED: Young man to help with advanced scientific experiments. Must be strong, healthy and willing to take risks. Salary, \$500 a month.

Now I knew Professor Knotts was an ungodly rich man, and supposedly a reputable scientist. I also knew that \$500 a month would be like five million to me and Ethel. Ethel is, or rather was, my wife and it was largely her insistence that I do something quick about getting us out of some very pressing debts that prompted me to present myself at Professor Knotts' laboratory that fatal spring morning.

I got the job all right, partly because I had a smattering of scientific knowledge, but largely because of my athletic physique and cast-iron sort of constitution. Now all that's left of that proud physique is my remembrance of it. Of course I have a better one now, but that's where all the trouble starts. You see, my brain and my body don't match. Sounds impossible, I know, but it's true.

How was I to know that Professor Knotts wanted a subject on which to try

out the working of his Time Machine? He had been working on it secretly for years, and like a fool I got my curiosity all worked up enough to try the thing. Of course that \$500 a month looked too good to pass up, even though I should have known I was sticking my neck out.

At first, everything seemed fine. Professor Knotts was certain his machine was perfect and I respected his judgment. He wanted someone to act as a Time Messenger. That's where I came in—someone to help him establish communication with a future civilization before he made his discovery public.

Now I don't doubt that the eminent gentleman had only the most altruistic motives at heart and I'm not one to question a great scientist's ideas, so I affably agreed to all his terms of secrecy, etc. That meant not telling Ethel but—oh well, she wasn't particularly the intellectual type anyway. She was too thrilled when I brought home a half a month's salary in advance to care for many details.

We had a hilarious time celebrating my new "job," which I told her was merely assisting Professor Knotts around his laboratory. Naturally I was a little jittery, who wouldn't be under the circumstances? That accounts for the unusually heavy drinking I did that night, much to Ethel's disgust. I often regret that that was the last impression my dear wife had of me.

THE natural result of that last evening together was that I showed up at the lab with a peach of a hangover. I still pride myself that it didn't show

A PRIZE-WINNING ENTRY IN



A beam of power-radiation hit Wanis between the eyes as machinery crashed down on me

so awfully much on the surface, but oh boy, how I felt inside. I almost wished the Time Machine would blow up and take me with it into eternity. My head was exploding already but I managed to smile and say "Good morning, Professor" as pleasantly as ever. He looked me over a trifle suspiciously and then cleared his throat.

"You know, Peter Brown," he said, "this is the morning we are to try the first real experiment on my Time Machine."

I nodded and he continued:

"You are, of course, fully acquainted with the risk involved?"

I nodded again.

"I cannot guarantee *where* you will land in the future," he said, "although I can determine *when*, and I have set the controls seven thousand years in advance."

Wow! I blinked nervously. Seven thousand years into the future! I almost missed the Professor's next words.

"You may find yourself in a city," he said, "or on an open road, or even in a private dwelling. It will take a lot of ingenuity to meet any situation which might arise."

I agreed with that all right! "I expect," he went on, "and hope you can somehow make contact with the scientists and learned men of that future civ-

OUR AMATEUR SHORT STORY CONTEST

ilization and secure their cooperation in allowing your passage to and from our respective times in a sort of friendly exchange of authentic data and ideas."

So that was his game! Well, it wasn't too fantastic, I guess. After all, why not? It would certainly be a boon to our war-torn civilization to get some of the low-down on our world's future.

"I will transport you from this platform," Professor Knotts said. Then he handed me a peculiar looking contraption. "You will take with you this Time Helmet. It is automatically set to carry you back to the present when you fit it to your head and click these two knobs over." He illustrated by a simple movement.

I took the thing gingerly and pictured myself looking something like an elongated ant. The Professor handed me a revolver.

"Just in case of emergency," he explained hesitatingly. "I shall expect you back in about three weeks for your first report, after which we shall make arrangements for future trips."

I coughed nervously, but even then didn't have sense enough to back out of the whole affair. The scientist turned and busied himself with a sheaf of papers.

"These," he said, "are the plans for assembling a larger Time Machine, which you are to take along with you in case you are able to make further progress with your future contacts than I expect." That was a good idea, I thought.

We went over again the agreement I had signed, covering the full explanation and terms of my mission. In case anything should "happen" to me and I did not return at all, my wife, Ethel, was to receive a compensation of \$200.00 a month for the rest of her natural life. This pretty little document had been signed, sealed and placed in the hands of a reputable firm of attorneys.

That was some relief anyway. It made a man feel better—just in case. I'm a crazy fool, I thought, but then the whole idea was not altogether too displeasing to my suppressed desire for high adven-

ture and thrills. Little did I realize what an involved and fantastic destiny was taking shape in that laboratory.

As I was still a little dizzy from my hangover, I allowed myself to be docilely led to an oval platform in one corner of the room. It was surrounded by all the weird gadgets only a Time Machine can boast. A tense silence followed our few minutes of parting conversation and I realized somewhat giddily that this was the big moment!

The Professor threw the manifold switches and the machine began to hum. A network of blue and violet rays of light stabbed out and around me. Talk about sensation! No wonder he wanted someone "strong and healthy." The vibrations increased until I thought every atom in my body was going to explode. The laboratory faded away and I became numbly aware of my surroundings seven thousand years in the future!

FATE does funny things. Sometimes I think she must have quite a sense of humor, else why did she plan it that I was catapulted into another scientific laboratory? Why couldn't I have landed in a lake, or the edge of a cliff or some such safe place?

No, it had to be in another laboratory, but what a laboratory! It looked more like a palace or a temple. Why, it was positively beautiful! Nothing dirty, smelly or unpleasant, just spick-and-span shiningness and wonder. Some of the paraphernalia set apart from the rest looked fragile and delicate.

I just caught a glimpse of all this—me, an uncouth barbarian from the twentieth century standing in the midst of all this splendor. I must have been unconscious for several minutes after arriving, for when my senses really began to coordinate I found I had already been stripped of my Time Helmet and the revolver.

I noticed two men eyeing me with interest. I guessed they were scientists, all right, and thought impudently that here was luck—two ninetieth century scientists right in my lap. They were handsome chaps, youngish, too, but I

sensed a mature intelligence about them. I was just about to open my mouth to speak when one of them sighed:

"Another Time Traveller, Zar." That stopped me cold. I wasn't even original.

They both looked at me searchingly and I began to get the feeling they were reading my mind like a book, so automatically I put up a sort of mental barrier, which was only natural. The man spoke:

"We have learned enough, Peter Brown," he said. "We don't blame you for shutting us out, but we have to ex-

catch my breath."

"It is the rule," said the one called Thoris. "Believe us, my friend, when we say that we know through experience that it is wisest not to allow this matter to develop further. The Supreme Council has ruled that all Time Travellers must be sent back immediately and their particular method of passage through Time closed from this end." He shook his head gravely. "No good can ever come of it."

His words gave me a feeling of keen disappointment and anger.

"But that's not fair!" I blurted out.

Meet the Author of This Story



Thaedra Alden

ABOUT myself, first of all, my real name is Elizabeth (Bettie) Hansen. Must I tell my age? Being a woman, I'll admit to somewhere in the twenties, but won't say exactly where!

As to my nature, I am incurably imaginative, romantic and idealistic, pervasively mixed up with a strong leaning towards the practical scientific, so you can see why I am so very much interested in science-fiction. When about 12 years old, I spent most of my time writing fairy stories—lots of them, for which I can remember winning a doll, jumping rope and box of candy at one time from a children's newspaper page.

Since then I have been mainly occupied with occult studies and astrology. I've done a little lecturing on occult philosophy and astrology—studies which have helped me greatly in better understanding myself and others.

Have also studied dietetics and am a strict vegetarian! Was formerly a Healing Secretary for the Rosicrucian Fellowship at Oceanside, Calif., where I helped people with advice on personal problems.

"Two-Timing Man" is my first effort at science-fiction writing. Ever since first starting to read science-fiction, I've wanted to write stories with a constructive viewpoint and hope for poor humanity's future welfare, character and development.

I'll certainly try to write some more stories, although having a baby in the house is like trying to rest on an active volcano and gives me precious little time.

—THAEDRA ALDEN.

amine all Time Travellers. It's part of our job." He turned to his companion:

"Have you made a record of this man, Zar?"

"Yes, Thoris," he replied, "but can't we delay his return for just a little while? My promise, to Daija, you know."

Right there I decided to put in my two cents' worth.

"Now just a minute," I began, and they settled back politely to listen to me rave. "From what I gather," I said, "you're going to shoot me back to my own time before I've had a chance to

"Our world's badly in need of some sane, scientific assistance right now, and what better means is there for us to get it than through Time Machines? After all, I should think you people would be a little more humanitarian than to give me the bum's rush like this!" I was sure getting hot under the collar and the two of them looked at me almost pityingly.

It was Zar who answered.

"Your people have not yet earned the right to such blessings as we enjoy," he said somewhat sadly and softly. "Only hard experience, in time, will soften the hearts and ennoble the characters of the

man's mind. Cannot you see, Peter Brown, what a grave injustice we would be doing your world if you brought back to it our knowledge, It is not ready for our life yet. Your people are too immature in every way. They must fight and work to make their progress real to them."

That stumped me. There was a lot in that pretty speech and as my thoughts were busy with it, I became aware that two more figures were entering the laboratory through a door in the east wall. A young man and woman came forward eagerly.

"Greetings, Daija and Wanis," smiled the two scientists.

"Here is your Time Traveller," said Zar to his daughter, "but remember, he must soon return to his Time so you may converse but a little while."

As the radiant creature turned to me I gazed goggle-eyed at the goddess-like girl before me. She was taller than I, with softly radiant golden skin and eyes the deepest purple I've ever seen. This was topped by luxuriant, lavender hair! The few jeweled straps and strings adorning her body could scarcely be called clothes. As to her figure—well, I didn't realize the human body could be so magnificent.

Her companion was no mean figure either, as masculine beauty goes. He was a marvelous specimen at least a head taller than I.

If there ever was a beautiful hunk of man he was it.

"When did he come, Dad?" he asked. "We hurried as soon as we got your call."

That surprised me, too, as I wondered in what manner Zar had summoned his daughter in such short time. I later learned these people had more than one peculiar way of accomplishing almost instantaneous communication. I had a hunch it was through some device in one of those huge rings he wore, and I was right.

The powerful force-rays they were able to wield through those harmless-looking rings were not to be sneezed at—no sirree.

AS THE gorgeous gal smiled at me I blushed and the young man, her husband I found out later, looked at me curiously. I hastily shut off my thoughts and he smiled in a friendly sort of way.

"I'm so glad you're a young person," said Daija. "Tell us, Peter Brown, about the young people of your age. Are they serious at all about their world-service, or are they completely pleasure-mad, as some of the books would have us believe?"

"Lady," I expostulated. "Some of those books need changing. Right now almost everybody is darned serious and working hard to win a war for freedom and right." There I was, all wound up and going good.

As we talked there in that glittering, palatial laboratory, I found out what genuine people these folks were. Just as we were getting really friendly, Thoris, who was made of sterner stuff, mentioned again that I must be getting back to 1943, having overstayed my allotted time. The girl and her husband seemed genuinely sorry.

By this time I had made up my mind I wasn't going to be gypped out of this golden opportunity to get a peek at this new world. Glancing around, I tried to conceive of some way to forestall the older man's determination to clap that Time Helmet on my head and send me back.

Carefully screening my thoughts, I bowed good-bye to Daija and Wanis. They rose to depart, but just as they reached the invisible door and it opened silently before them I called for them to wait a moment. They paused and in that instant, before Zar or Thoris could try their magic tricks on me, I sprinted for the door like greased lightning. Why I should ever try such a fool stunt, I don't know. It was just a mad impulse to get outside and trust to luck that something would happen to keep me there a bit longer.

Well, it did happen! And what a holocaust of human wreckage followed! I didn't reckon with the numerous gadgets in that wonder-laboratory. In my

mad dash I jumped over a small silver railing enclosing a mass of indescribable machinery. At my first move Wanis had leaped forward to intercept me, and at the very same instant Thoris flashed a paralyzing ray on me from one of his rings. I went down like a ton of bricks, my weight striking Wanis head-on and the momentum of my rush carrying us forward. We slid over the polished floor right smack into the midst of that glittering machinery.

It sounds rather cold to describe in so many words the bedlam that broke loose then. My foot struck a lever as I jammed up against those trick gadgets. A needle-point ray of some sort of unbelievable and fantastic power-radiation hit Wanis right between the eyes. He went out like a light, with every brain cell in his cranium totally disintegrated. I had escaped this fate to dislodge machinery of incredible weight and mass which came crashing down on my spine, crushing it completely and practically severing my torso in two.

There we were, a pretty messy sight cluttering up the laboratory, but the two scientists acted quickly. What they did to remedy the situation has never ceased to amaze me beyond belief. I guess they were actually shattered out of their nineteenth century serenity. In response to Daija's agonized cries to save her husband at all costs, they did the only thing possible under the circumstances.

With the wonderful efficiency of that age, we were whisked instantly to an adjoining hospital where wizards of surgery took the only uninjured part of me—my brain, and transferred it to the then empty-headed but otherwise untouched and perfect body of the man Wanis! I was told later that this was the only course of procedure open to them, other than letting us both die. Both Zar and Thoris felt responsible for what had happened in their laboratory and had urged that the operation be performed. Time was precious and no one had a chance to give much thought to all the complications which would naturally follow such action. But what complications!

WHEN I came to weeks later, the first thing I saw was a pretty pink-haired nurse. At first I thought I had been drinking too much and then, gradually, the whole horrible remembrance swept over me. I jerked up immediately, and the nurse pushed me back gently, uttering soothing noises. I felt weirdly and incomprehensibly "different" but even then the truth didn't dawn on me.

I noticed, with growing surprise and uneasiness, that my feet were much farther away from me than was normal. I threw back the covers and looked down at a body which wasn't mine! It was a magnificent body, to be sure, but not the one I had been living in for 28 years! Feebly I closed my eyes and waited for a moment before opening them. Yes, it was still the same—those two strange, long legs just weren't mine, or were they?

By this time people were filling my room, Zar, Thoris, Daija and several dignified-looking gentlemen whom I took to be doctors. They were exceedingly solemn, and it was Daija who explained, rather tearfully, the whole story of my peculiar predicament. She looked at me long and searchingly and tears started to flow as she sensed the difference of my personality in the body of her beloved husband.

"You're not Wanis," she said, brokenly.

"No, ma'am," I replied mournfully, "and I've got a wife back in 1943."

Daija ran from the room and Zar hurried after to comfort her. The rest closed in on me with all sorts of consoling phrases and suggestions until in exasperation I shouted:

"Get out! Let me alone! I've got to think!"

They got, all right, and I leaned back weakly. I couldn't think at first. My poor little twentieth Century brain could scarcely stand the strain, but as the days passed in the pleasant surroundings of that hospital I gradually reoriented myself to the point where I could face the reality of my position with some degree of saneness.

The formerly stern Thoris took me under his wing, so to speak, and as he was a member of the Supreme Council and influential in governmental circles I received every consideration possible. In fact, I'm really a sort of celebrity in these parts now and they're giving me "time" to make up my mind whether I wish to remain here as a citizen of 8943 A.D. or return through their Time Machine to 1943. Meanwhile, I'm getting the lowdown on what it's like here in the future and do I have plenty to learn! If only my conscience didn't bother me so, I could have a right good time in this magical wonderland.

Did I say "conscience"? To be exact, it should be "Ethel!" Ye gods, I don't even know to whom I'm rightfully married. I can't help feeling bigamistically guilty with my brain and personality belonging to one woman and my body and social status to another. Daija, that lavender-haired lovely, starts to weep every time she sees me. We do our best to avoid each other, but we can't deny there's an almost irresistible attraction between us. Magnetism, I guess.

Well, it was at one of our fateful meetings in the laboratory that Fate gave me another nasty crack. Zar and Thoris had promised to show me more about the workings of their marvelous method of "fishing" people who were on a Time Track headed for their Time. It had something to do with the flow of the Time Stream, and they had developed a method of sensing the particular vibration of any explorative ray or beam headed their way. After the Time Travellers arrived or had been "caught" by their tractor time rays, they are sent back by reversing the ray and then blocking off that vibration in some incredible way. That is putting it very roughly.

Well, we were seated again in the laboratory, Daija and I exchanging furtive glances, when Thoris announced a Time Traveller was on the way. Even as he spoke, a force-field around a raised dais began to glow brightly. A vague premonition struck me as not one, but two

figures slumped gently to the floor of the dais. I arose, frozen to the marrow.

"It's Ethel!" I gulped, "and the Professor."

THE others looked at me, sensing the whole situation. As I stood there like a statue while my erstwhile wife and the Professor were coming to, a million thoughts flashed through my mind. Evidently Ethel had raised rumpus with the Professor about my continued absence. Knowing her as I do, it's easy to guess how she finally broke him down and got him to confide the whole story. Now the two of them were here—right on my tail and anxious to see what had happened. Was I in a spot!

When they were revived Ethel looked around with obvious distaste and a little fear. The Professor was exultant.

"We've done it, my dear, we've done it!" he kept saying over and over.

Her glance swept over me without the slightest recognition of course, and with forward crispness she turned to Zar and Thoris.

"So this is the future is it? Where is my husband?" she demanded. "He is supposed to have come here months ago and—" her voice trailed off and she looked to Professor Knotts for support.

"Mrs. Brown," began Zar kindly. "Your husband is safe and well, although he is somewhat changed."

"Changed?" she asked sharply. "Just what do you mean?"

"Ethel," I finally found my tongue and blurted out, "Don't you know me?"

She froze to ice as she looked up to my seven-foot height from her diminutive five feet. She had always hated being a half-pint and now, being told this Greek-god-like person was her husband was certainly not her idea of a joke.

"My word!" ejaculated Professor Knotts, "Is that really you, Peter?"

At this embarrassing moment, Zar, with kindly tact took the Professor by the arm and led him gently away. They were soon engrossed in what was no doubt, highly scientific palaver. Daija

stood by, silent and sympathetic as Ethel looked at us suspiciously. Then she got mad.

"What sort of trick is this," she exclaimed hotly.

"Now wait a minute, Ethel," I interrupted quickly. "It's me, only I've got a different body. My other one was wrecked in an accident, but my brain's the same, and it was transferred to the body of this lady's," I waved toward Daija, "husband. Honest, I've been about crazy."

From the way she looked I could tell Ethel was as jealous as a cat.

"So," she sputtered, "this is how you desert me and leave me to wonder and worry about you, while all the time you're gallivanting around with—with this person. Well listen to me, Peter, I think this is just your way of getting rid of me, and if this is how they act in the future I don't want to stay here another minute!"

"Johnny!" she yelled at the Professor. "Take me back immediately." She turned to me scornfully, "I'm divorcing you just as soon as I get back to 1943—you deserting Romeo!"

I was still rather tongue-tied as Professor Knotts came up and took Ethel's arm in a possessive sort of manner. So that was the way the wind blew! If I hadn't been so embarrassed, it would have been funny. After living with poised, intelligent people for some time, this emotional display seemed rather in bad taste to me. I guess I've changed a lot, all right. Perhaps Wanis' body is conveying some of its earthly personality to me.

I stood there dumbly as the scientists sent the two of them back through Time—Ethel with her head held high, and the Professor with a dazed but smugly, happy expression on his face. Then I turned and went out of the laboratory. I had to be alone to think some more and I needed peace and quiet.

The Sky-Meadows! That was it! I'd go there and gather myself together. These are fabulous pleasure-grounds they have here. Gorgeous man-made parks, suspended in the clouds, they are

complete with hills, brooklets, trees, flowers and color, color everywhere. Even their mossy grasses are set out in different hues, colored marble edifices for convenience and comfort nestle in the valleys like living jewels. Just thinking about them revived me.

To reach these Sky Meadows, most people scorn to use their private aircraft. Instead, for the sport and thrill of it, they ride their flying horses. Oh, yes, they have flying horses here. Evolution plus science have somehow concocted these wonderful animals. They are raised solely for pleasure purposes. The creatures themselves are keen as a whip, very affectionate and needless to say, it's one thrill in a million to ride between their mighty wings as they race along and then take off into the air. I've spent lots of time pursuing this sport, and I've often grinned to myself thinking what fun it would be to ride down 1943 Broadway like a fugitive from the classic myths. But that's out of the question, now. I'm here to stay.

AFTER tethering my horse on a beautifully yellow-orange slope, I sat down and stretched out comfortably. The air was like champagne. Ah, this was the life, I thought. But I hadn't been there more than ten minutes before I noticed my winged Pegasus sniffing the breeze knowingly. Then looking upward, I saw another mount and rider drifting toward me. Daija!

She dismounted and came toward me, hands outstretched. Then her eyes looked into mine.

"I know what you've been through," she said softly, "and I understand."

Everything broke clear to me as I pulled her toward me in a heavenly embrace.

"I'm going to christen you Petoro," she said happily. "You are now a regular citizen of the year 8943 A.D."

"Daija," I said seriously. "What can I do here—to make myself useful?"

"You might open a 'Kindness to Time Travellers Bureau'!" she replied with mock austerity. "After all, with your past experience you should be admirably

suit to the job!"

"Yes," I continued eagerly, "perhaps the Council will give me permission to treat befuddled time travellers royally, invite them to dinner, show them the town!" I was getting excited about the idea now.

"After all," I reasoned, "the usual time traveller is never the dangerous

type, in fact, your father mentioned once that I was the most impetuous one he'd ever seen!"

We both laughed at that, and as I took Daija once more into my arms and gazed into the eyes of that perfect woman, I knew then and there that I would never again have Time hang heavily on my hands!



HEADLINERS IN THE NEXT ISSUE

WITHOUT doubt **EXILE TO CENTAURI** will prove to be one of the most unusual stories of an exile you will have ever read. This featured novel, by Ross Rocklynne, deals with a young scientist whose life is marred because he is a hypochondriac. Then, right in the middle of one of his sinking spells, he gets tangled up with a Nazi agent and his own new invention and—bingo! **EXILE TO CENTAURI**, where the ensuing results will amaze you.

* * * *

OF THE full-length novelet, **THE LOTOS EATERS**, by Bolling Branham, the main thing we can tell you is that you will enjoy the very style of the writing itself. In this unusual tale the author draws a sciencefiction parallel to one of the adventures of Ulysses and presents us with an adventure on an unknown world which will live with you vividly long after you have laid the story aside.

* * * *

NOT to be overlooked is **THE AMNESIAC**, by George Edwards, the story of an amnesia victim in the future. This is one of the best attempts to get into the mind of a psychiatric case that we have ever seen, and the resultant story will leave you with an unexpected little heartache. This is one of our prize-winning stories, by the way.

* * * *

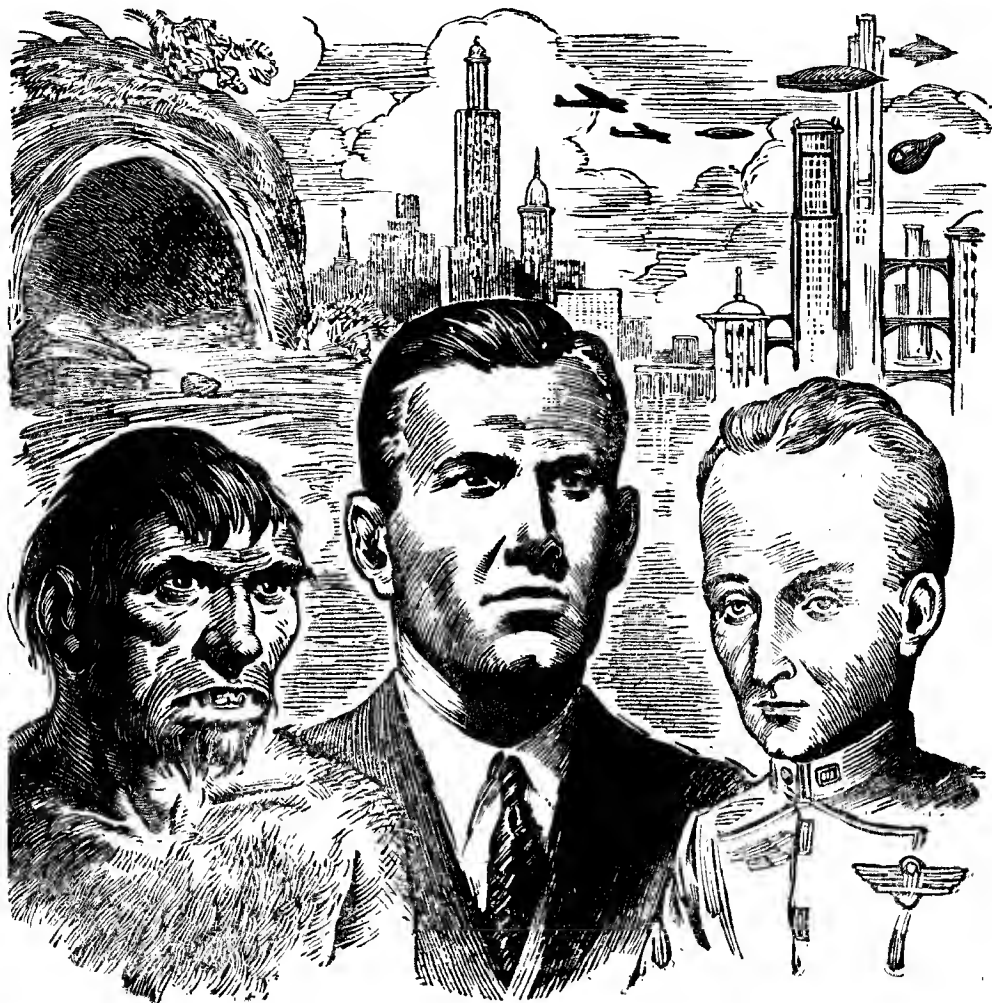
DARING, dauntless and doughty Tubby, that fat little dreamland scientist created by Ray Cummings, will be back in another of his fantastic adventures in **TUBBY—ATOM SMASHER**, a story in which he invades the world of the infinitely small and goes the Golden Atom hero one better. We suspect Author Cummings of taking a sly dig at his own famous story in this hilarious adventure of Tubby's.

* * * *

EFFECTIVE indeed will be the art work on the interior and the cover painting. And there will be as many unusual short stories as we can find room for in the cargo hatch so that our August number will be a veritable Victory Garden of plums for you discriminating lovers of the fantastic and astounding and whimsical in the realm of sciencefiction.

* * * *

ROUNDING out the issue will be all the regular departments, plus announcements and anything of special interest to be printed for you at that time. And Sergeant Saturn, of course, will be riding herd on the rookies in the astrostation chamber and rarin' to exchange rocket shots of repartee with rambunctious readers.



THE MAN OF TOMORROW

By RICHARD TOOKER

IS NATURE a thinking scientist? That she is a technical eugenicist most informed readers will emphatically deny. But that she is a practical experimenter who puts all forms of life through her great laboratory for survival cannot be gainsaid.

No evolutionist with eight-cylinder words is needed to prove that almost every form of life known is in a fluid or flexible state. Things are constantly in a condition of flux, and it is not nec-

A Glimpse into the Future of Humanity

essary to read the rocks to comprehend this.

Take, for example, the marvelous work of Luther Burbank in the plant world. Consider the work in the animal kingdom of stock breeders. Science has even gone so far as to treat seed and sex hormones with chemicals and various rays to engender change in the resultant stock. Vegetables are being grown today in proper sizes to fit the modern mechanical refrigerator. Fruits are deliberately grown according to col-

or, flavor, lusciousness.

The list of accomplishments is well nigh endless. Man has been able, with his constantly increasing knowledge, to bend the life around him to his will. But man has pollinated, grafted and worked with plant life to produce things for his own palate and purposes. He has bred stock to produce finer meats for his table, handsomer pets for his delectation, fancier animals for his prize shows, speedier dogs and horses for his pleasure.

When Nature Is Ruthless

The comparatively minor matter of survival has rarely entered into his calculations, survival, that is, against a hostile environment—for man has figured on supplying the proper environment for his creations. Nature, on the other hand, has bred for survival down through the ages. A transient phase of utility does not interest Nature.

Anything which does not prove workable or serviceable she has ruthlessly tossed over on the junk heap. But it is a cold fact that nothing which has been really good has been lost.

Perhaps Nature makes a mistake in a certain species and finds she has to discard it, but if one good trait or characteristic has been developed in the process, this she keeps. Ears were good, so they remained. Eyes were good, so they were retained. Bipedes and quadrupeds proved successful, so the four-limbed creature became almost as universal as the Model T Ford in Michigan. And so on.

The Great Experiment

Nature pointed the way for man long before she even thought of man himself. Her latest experiment on any large scale is at present working out in her laboratory. This comparatively new idea is—intelligence.

For approximately the past one million years Nature has been toying with this crazy experiment. Individual entities who can think for themselves. Man is the present model built from this

blue-print, although at times he doesn't seem to show or use much intelligence.

But go on for a moment with a consideration of Nature's methods and the reasons therefor.

Take, for example, a drove of wild horses in the "high country" of northern Arizona. Year in and year out they are sired by a few stallions, all closely related, led usually by a champion fighter who heads the main herd.

Now and then, a young stallion strays or is driven off with a mare or two. It is all inbreeding, close, and the introduction of new blood is exceptional. Though now and then a domestic horse may go wild or chance to breed with the wild ones.

What of it, the unthinking reader asks? Aren't they the worst kind of runty scrubs, not even big enough to be saddle ponies? Yes, indeed, they are for the most part too small for man to use for saddle or draft. But, consider this—a small wild stallion can whip a domestic stallion twice his weight, and a runty wild horse can survive and multiply where thoroughbred horses would die in a short time. The wild horse breeds for his own species' good, solely.

Merciless Efficiency

Ranchers concede that the wild horse is the toughest saddle stock on legs, when an individual one is caught that is large enough in proportion to a man and saddle. Through generations of inbreeding, Nature concentrates the weaknesses of a strain in certain individuals, which die before the breeding age, as cripples or diseased specimens. Just as the weak traits are doubled and redoubled in some, so the strong, surviving traits are doubled and redoubled in those which go on to perpetuate their kind.

But Nature does err in this merciless efficiency, does some biologist say? Didn't dinosaurs die out in their geological age because they got so big there was not enough for them to eat? Only another apparent truth. The dinosaurs did not actually die out. Only the giant

varieties died out, because they proved impractical.

The dinosaur strain still exists today in the form of the Easter Island lizards, the Arizona horned toad, to mention a few examples. Nature never breeds to extinction. She breeds only to transition, and to one end—greater capacity to survive and propagate.

Innumerable other cases could be considered, but a little study of the king of creation himself is revealing, to cool-headed scientists who do not fear to face facts and are concerned only with the truth. Take man apart and see if he can be profitably put back together again.

Man Himself Can Be Improved

In spite of all his work with plants and other animals, man has never seriously considered making an improvement in human breeding. Every time any theory or pertinent comment is advanced there is ever an avalanche of disapproval. In pseudo-scientific stories of the distant future where man is depicted as a member of an eugenic race, with a system of selective mating, there is always an objector or a non-conformist.

As a direct result the author perforce must manipulate the love theme of his story to bring about the happy mating of two strong-willed individuals.

It might be unfair to call this bosh or rubbish. For, after all, Nature is experimenting with intelligence. She gave man the power to think for himself as a self-contained entity, and man has every right to exercise this ability. There being such tender emotions in the world as love, filial devotion, honor, courage, integrity—surprising as that may seem, at the present time—there is no reason why they should not go on and come to full fruition of beauty in the world of the future.

Man need not be blind to his own destiny. While taking a leaf out of Nature's notebook and breeding her plants and animal life up for utility and beauty, it is high time he turned an analytical eye on his own shortcomings, to con-

sider seriously the up-breeding of the human race. This brings up the question—should survival or utility be striven for?

The obvious answer is—both. Yet how can this be brought about?

Can There Be a Future Utopia?

It makes a pleasant dream to envision a future Utopia where all people are healthful and beautiful. All men are to be bronzed Greek gods, standing from six feet to six-four. All women are to be goddesses five-eight to six feet tall. There would be no cripples, no mental deficient, no ill health, no crime. The life span would be lengthened to, say, two hundred vigorous years—and then a swift obliteration without the long-drawn out process of senile decay.

An appealing picture truly. Still, can this end be achieved, providing it is agreed that a future world like this is desirable?

Despite the fact that mankind has for the past one thousand years shown a marked tendency to grow taller, there is no assurance that the man of tomorrow will be a physically perfect giant of six and one-half to seven feet tall. Before visualizing a picture of just what mankind's descendants may look like, it is best to consider how to take steps to bring about this up-breeding without jeopardizing personal rights and liberties and a free way of life.

The Matter of Free Will

Since it can hardly be fair to take forcible steps to prevent this marriage or compel that one—even for eugenic perfection—must be taken into consideration the manner of typing various mental and physical types of humanity. There could be carried out the Herculean job of classification by aptitude tests, the study of genealogical factors, and the throwing together of people it is advisable should mate to produce the best strains.

Science is constantly advising concerning discoveries about the proper foods and drink to improve mental and

physical health. More is being learned daily about hormones, genes, vitamins and the glands of the human body, ductless or otherwise. Man can take a leaf from his own agronomy notebook and apply to himself the cultivation and care that he bestows on plants and animals.

Nature can be given a tremendously helping hand by going beyond the present steps of developing serums to fight disease. Serums and treatments to overcome insufficient growth, excessive growth, attenuation or obesity can be developed. Mental disorders, criminal tendencies and moronic cases can be studied and treated by the administration of the proper glandular medicines just as surely as insulin is now used to supplement the failure of the pancreas in diabetics.

The Man of Tomorrow

The first great step in this fancied planned campaign would be education. Just as man superimposes his wishes on Nature in the breeding of livestock and the intensive cultivation of plants so could he, in lesser and gentler manner, improve the stock of his own race. As revolutionary as this idea may seem to many at first blush, it is only a few short steps beyond measures already adopted by several state governments. The blood test required to insure freedom from the taint of syphilis before a marriage license will be issued is an example.

Just what will the man of tomorrow be like? Here is a possible picture. Because it will be essentially a machine world there will be little need for brawn or physical prowess—and a greater need for intelligence. Hence, the man of the future may well be a slender and somewhat slight individual with a bulging cranium to accommodate his enlarged brain capacity. But he will not be a weakling, for Nature breeds in toughness for survival.

He will likely be wiry and agile, with perfect digestive and eliminative organs. His arches should be high, and his nervous reactions will surely be finely coordinated for the operation of his intricate

machines and the skill needed to manufacture them.

The Promise of the Four Freedoms

An inkling of what the man of tomorrow will be like, once this war is over and democracy is firmly established, can be gleaned from the inspiring speeches of Vice-President Henry A. Wallace, who has pictured the Century of the Common Man in unforgettable words. With the extension of social legislation, with the wide application of the Four Freedoms, including freedom from want and fear, man will at last emerge ready to make progress, unhampered by ancient and outworn handicaps.

The introduction of new labor-saving devices, the lessening of hours of toil, the increased understanding of nutritional problems, better housing and augmented opportunities for wholesome recreation, will enable men and women to develop their personalities.

"A healthy mind in a healthy body," will be the rule rather than the exception.

Corrective Overhauling

During economic stress, wars, and so on, the small and tough man, like the small and tough horse, could starve out the big man with his proportionately larger appetite and lesser ability to manipulate machines swiftly. A comparatively small, wiry, quick-brained man could outmaneuver a big, bulky man with slower reactions. Just as Nature junked the giant reptiles, so may it logically be presumed that the same sort of general law will apply to giant men.

But Nature needs an intelligent, helping hand to speed up the process, to urge mankind on to this distant goal, whatever the exact circumstances and man's characteristics might be. Just as labor has been expended to improve the plant and animal world to meet requirements, the need now is for improvement in human beings themselves.

Man is in need of a corrective overhauling. Whether this is brought about by education, selective breeding, or a

workable combination of both, the point is that it must be brought about in a calm, sane, and benevolent way. The milk of human kindness must not clabber into such dreadful and indigestible curds as now affect the moral digestion of inhabitants of far too much of the earth.

The second paragraph of one of the most remarkable documents ever produced by man—The Declaration of American Independence—starts:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

Unfortunately, all men are not created equal mentally and physically. Samuel Colt and Colonel Bowie took care of one angle of the physical aspect in these United States, but they did not solve the problem of true equality. And there remains the mental, the more important part of the problem—intelligence and science step in.

There May Be a Brighter Side

War always brings about a resurgence of developments in arts, sciences and industries. Look what the present war has contributed to the growth of knowledge and the use of the sulfanilamide compounds. Not only that, but many changes have come about in the feeding and training of troops.

The aftermath of this lamentable holocaust will yet have its compensations. A finer and healthier type of manhood and womanhood than the world has ever yet known will evolve from the stern and hard facts of this war. And chiefly this will be so because there will have been added that priceless ingredient—education.

It is the privilege, therefore, as well as the duty, of every living man and woman to set to work to make the ringing and immortal words of the Declaration of American Independence true in every possible sense—all around the world. Plan and build for a man of tomorrow of whom Captain Future will be proud.



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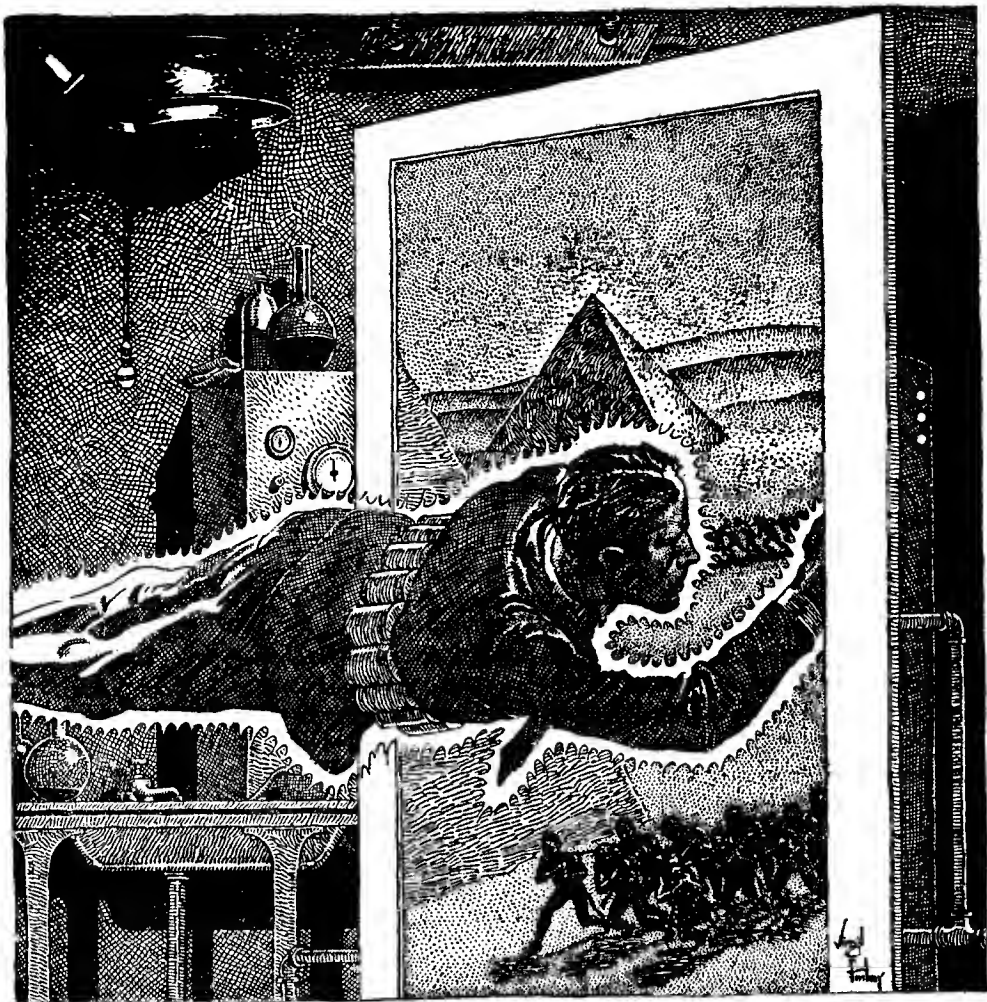
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A tremendous shock ran through Parks and he seemed to glide into eternity

THE GOLDEN TEMPLE

By RAY CUMMINGS

A Pyramid of Gold, Seen in a Fourth Dimension Machine, Whips Up the Avarice of Parks, so He Goes After It Ruthlessly, Murderously!

"S O you're at it again?" Parks spoke from the shadows of the laboratory doorway. "Any luck this time, John?"

John Sinclair was at his instrument table over in a corner of the big, dim laboratory. From where Parks stood in the doorway he could see that some of the mechanisms were glowing. The weird blue-green and red sheens from them illumined Sinclair's thin bent figure, painted his intent face lurid.

It glinted like unearthly fire in his shock of grey-white hair.

Sinclair did not look up.

"You, Rolf? What do you want? You can see I'm busy."

"Well, naturally I'm interested," Parks drawled ironically. He was a big, powerful fellow; a man in his thirties, with a handsome, though heavy-featured face surmounted by a close-clipped shock of bristling, reddish hair. He was Dr. Sinclair's

THE GOLDEN TEMPLE

cousin. In his heart Parks felt a little contemptuous of the weird, mysterious research work at which Sinclair always was puttering. Parks knew nothing of science, and he cared less—except that possibly there might be some money in it for him.

The idea of profiting from some invention of Sinclair's had dawned upon Parks about a month before. Sinclair had never yet explained anything he was doing. But he had admitted he was on the verge of some big discovery. He was wholly impractical, just a cracked, aging scientist.

"You get the invention workable," Parks had told him, "and if there's any merit in it, I'll be your business manager. We'll turn it into money. You need business skill to get anywhere, John. Many a good invention just dies, or goes for a song, because the inventor is not a businessman."

Sinclair had not answered. By nature he was a secretive fellow. But Parks knew he could handle him. And handle the profits. He chuckled whenever he thought of that. Sinclair could be persuaded to put up the capital, and even if the thing was no good, Parks would get plenty out of it.

Old Sinclair would go back to fussing with more science, and never bother to check on what had happened to his capital.

"Aren't you going to invite me in?" Parks added.

"Come in," agreed Sinclair. "But keep quiet, will you?"

The older man was obviously tense, excited. Parks lounged into the room, scaled his hat to a bench and sat watching. On the table in front of Sinclair a dozen weird little mechanisms of vacuum tubes, wires and grids were all glowing with current.

FROM a big crystal, beams of colored lights were focused on a metallic screen which stood upright on a white metal frame. And as Parks stared it seemed that on the screen colored images were taking form. A scene in weird, fantastic color—a scene with movement in it.

"Got it!" Sinclair suddenly murmured. "At last—"

"Got what?" Parks demanded. "What is that? Motion picture machine? Television? The color scheme is cockeyed."

The blurred little scene seemed to show a red sky, with blue trees and an orange-colored river, rippled with little waves by a wind.

"The new world!" murmured Sinclair. "New to us, but so old, so different . . . What we could imagine—and yet so different, this reality."

He seemed to have forgotten Parks. He sat staring, trembling. His hand clutched a switch-lever. As he worked the lever the scene clarified.

A broad river with flat banks appeared. Graceful trees lined the banks. Figures were on the road near the river—a quaint looking cart, with a thick-necked animal drawing it slowly along. Men walked along beside the cart. Other men worked in a flat field nearby.

Parks sucked in his breath. What a weird scene! Were those human figures? Some seemed white; others black, like negroes. But there were others, too. These were fantastically garbed shapes in red and blue—men with angular long robes and striped headaddresses which dangled down the backs of their necks.

One group was almost nude, brawny men with orange-red skin and round bullet heads. A group of them appeared by the road, milling forward with half a dozen robed men lashing at them with long red whips.

"Weird," Parks said. "Say, John, where the devil are you getting that scene from?"

Still the absorbed Sinclair ignored him. Suddenly the viewpoint of the scene shifted a little so that a huge object by the river came into view. A golden temple, in the process of being built. It was a monstrous square structure of huge golden blocks.

GOLD! Fascinated, Parks stared breathless.

Thousands of slaves, powerful, naked men with skins of white, black, orange and red, labored here. They were erecting the giant golden temple. Lashed by whips, a hundred or

more of them, harnessed together, came along the road dragging one of the oblong golden blocks. It rested in a crude cradle of wood.

Pure gold! In a weird, iridescent sunlight, that sparkled with orange glints on the river, the great block of gold shone resplendent. Over by the big temple, which already had risen several tiers, myriad groups of the slaves toiled dragging more gold blocks. Slowly, precariously, they hoisted them with crude and cumbersome-looking contrivances of wood and rope, like giant blocks and tackles.

Fifty thousand slaves, working here in this day shift—a vast scene of unlimited man-power, pulling and shoving and sweating, with the cruel whips urging them as though in truth this were a desperate task so gigantic that to build this great temple in a lifetime needed desperate, unflagging haste.

Gold! Gold in quantity here beyond the dreams of any man of this Earth-world! The sight of it shot a stabbing thrill into Parks. Just a few chips from just one of these big blocks would be enough to last one a lifetime!

"John," Parks gasped, "the gold—look at it! So that's what you've been after! You old fox! No wonder you didn't want to brag until you were sure. Well, you've done it. At least we can see it. The Fourth Dimension? Not this world, but still right here? I remember your lecture on that sort of thing . . . Come on—tell me—is it—is it possible for us to get there?"

"Yes, I can get there," old Sinclair murmured. Seemingly he was talking mostly to himself. "A Golden Temple? Not a bad name for it. A thing of enduring splendor—"

The rambling words exasperated the excited Parks. Always a man of hot temper, he leaned forward and seized Sinclair by the arm.

"Stop that, will you?" he rasped. "What do you think I am? Here I've been waiting around all these months for you to produce something, and now you sit mumbling, ignoring me."

The grip on Sinclair's arm twitched the hand on the switch-lever. The

current blinked out of the screen and the weird scene went dark.

Sinclair came out of his awed wonderment. He whirled on his chair.

"Just what do you think you're doing, Rolf?" he demanded.

"I want to talk about it, cried Parks. "We've got a fortune here. I'm in it with you. You always said I was in it."

"Did I? I don't remember."

"Well, if you didn't, you implied it. I've waited around for months."

"Waiting because you're too lazy to work at anything. See here, Rolf, if you want let's have it out right now."

"I want to know what you've discovered here. You say we can go after that gold? Some Fourth Dimension mechanism? That scene we saw—"

"Yes, I can go. I don't know. I wonder if I would have enough nerve!"

His voice wandered off. Again the exasperated Parks seized him.

"You don't want to share anything with me. Is that it?"

"That's it," Sinclair snapped. "I don't want any part of you, Rolf, and you've always known it. But I'm not thinking of money. Fame, achievement and the advancement of science, what do you know of things like that? And then old Sinclair's temper flared. "Take your hands off me. Get out of here. Get out and stay out. You've always been a nuisance all your life."

PARKS had no idea how it happened. Certainly he did not intend it. But Sinclair's sarcastic words made him see red. His fist lashed out, caught Sinclair on the jaw. With a little mumbling moan the older man fell sidewise, twisted in his seat and slumped to the floor. There was a gruesome crack. His head hit a projection of the metal table-leg.

Parks staggered erect, staring down. The goggling white face of Sinclair stared up at him. Sinclair was dead. For a moment Parks stood mute with horror and fear. Already he had a prison record and he had been seen coming in here tonight.

The thought of escape now leaped into Parks' brain. A trip into the

Fourth Dimension might be the answer. Old Sinclair's musing words echoed in his mind: "Yes, I can go. I don't know. I wonder if I would have enough nerve!"

Parks had nerve enough — now! There was no other way out. But where was the mechanism? And how did one operate it? . . .

Then Parks remembered a little black book in which old Sinclair always so meticulously recorded the results of his experiments. Would that tell what to do? Where was the book?

A panic of haste swept over him. At any moment someone might come in here. But with his fear, triumph was mingled. Mountains of gold ingots were in that other realm. He would find some way of bringing back enough of it to make him rich for life. With riches, any difficulties regarding this murder would be solved.

He found the notebook in a drawer of the table. Swiftly he riffled through it. Weird formulae, meaningless scientific diagrams met his gaze. Then he found the heading:

TRANSITION MECHANISM

There was a diagram which illustrated a weird-looking skeleton head-gear, with connecting wires to wrist-lets, a belt with a battery box, and wires down the legs to anklets. The scientific problems involved in the transition were meaningless to Parks. But a few phrases were intelligible:

"An aura, which in effect is an electrolyte field, will be created around the living body of the operator. Within it, any objects close to the body of the operator, his clothing, his equipment, simultaneously will be affected."

Ah! So gold could be brought back! Parks, with triumph mounting in him, searched further through the pages. Here were directions for operating the mechanism. They seemed simple.

"With vibration-sorters automatically pre-set to my determined single destination, after starting, no manual operation should be necessary."

Simple enough. And the destina-

tion was that weird scene which had appeared on Sinclair's image-grid. A further sentence confirmed it.

"In effect the physical transition is a mere reversal of the visual reception. An attuned following of the incoming elitote vibration-rays. Note that this involves a journey in our Earth-space, automatically attained, an equivalent of a few thousand spatial miles which of necessity separate the co-existing realms. A swift spatial transition, to the consciousness of the operator, perhaps only what would be termed a few minutes—"

Only a few minutes. No need for supplies, for food or water.

Parks found the skeleton transition mechanism in a box in a corner of the laboratory. Within a minute he had donned it. The tight fitting band he slipped over his forehead. The double-layer metal belt, with its dozen intricate little gadgets connected by wires to the battery, he buckled around his waist. More wires dangled from the belt to his wrists and ankles.

All fool-proof. Parks chuckled. Sinclair had planned better than he realized when he had made the contrivance so simple. Nothing much here to operate but a starting lever.

PARKS was ready. He lay down on the floor. And suddenly he realized that he was trembling. One cannot stand upon the brink of the Unknown without being afraid. But he mastered the fear. He pressed the little switch.

A tremendous shock ran through him. His senses reeled. This was followed by a gliding sensation as though he had been hurled into eternity.

Next he realized that he had been unconscious. His senses were slowly coming back. Also he had not been hurt. Everything certainly must be all right . . .

Though he could not analyze it, it was just partial consciousness. He seemed to be floating, weightless, in a vast, humming grey abyss. Blurred shifting shadows like swirling mist flitted dimly around him. Everything was faintly humming, throbbing.

It could have been only a brief con-

sciousness. Then pleasantly he slid again into dark and silent emptiness...

Queer. Had it all been imagination? Memory of the dead Sinclair, the laboratory room, that adventure into the Unknown—were all those things hallucinations?

Abruptly Parks realized he was lying on a soft sandy ground. It was daylight. A warm day, with a gentle breeze. He raised himself up on one elbow and found he was dizzy. Those memories? Of course they had been real. The transition mechanism was on him now. It was no longer humming, throbbing.

He looked around at the strange scene. A placid blue sky arched overhead, sparkling with sunlight, speckled with fleecy-white, slowly drifting clouds. The place where he was resting seemed to be a flat, sandy desert. A river gurgled nearby. Flat banks and fringes of trees marked its edges.

Then Parks, not yet alertly conscious, with his mind slow of impressions, became aware of certain sounds. Men shouted stridently, whips cracked. The axles of a crude vehicle squealed like a lost soul.

On a road near Parks a big primitive, woden cart with thick, solid wheels came into view. It was laden with grain. A thick-necked brown animal was drawing it. As Parks stared, the cart stopped at the side of the road. Cracking whips and shouting men's voices grew louder. The cart had drawn clumsily aside as a long, harnessed line of brown skinned men clad only with gee-strings went by. After them they dragged a great stone block in a wooden cradle.

Sweating, a hundred or more of these panting slaves tugged at this gigantic square of stone. A group of men in queer triangular fabric-robos urged them onward with cracking whips. These whip wielders were sharp-featured and brown-skinned. Fabric headresses protected the back of their necks from the hot sunlight.

The scene was the same one that had registered in old Sinclair's image

grid. With confused, startled surprise Parks recognized it. But where had gone the fantastic color? This blue-grey river sparkled with normal sunlight. These men were all brown-skinned, though the brawny, muscular slaves were darker. And the Golden Temple?

Quickly Parks turned and stared across the desert sand.

Well back from the river, behind a line of the fleecy green trees, towered a giant, partially finished edifice.

Thousands of drudging slaves with crude tools were hoisting great stone blocks into tier-like steps. Already three tiers had been constructed. The materials they used were blocks—gray stone blocks.

A LITTLE knowledge is such a dangerous thing!

Those fantastic colors of the image on Sinclair's screen were just aberrations of his light-color beams, distortions of reception through an intricate set of vacuums, prisms and filters. As though by the magic of alchemy the same aberrations, to Parks' unscientific and always avaricious gaze, had transmuted these huge stone blocks into gold!

The dazed, numbed Parks little realized he had staggered to his feet. That great edifice which was being built had a peculiar shape. He saw now that there were others behind it, far smaller than this one was destined to be. The smaller ones were finished. In the distance they stood out against the yellow sands of the desert like mute sentinels, picketing their vast domain.

A sudden shout sounded near at hand. Parks became aware that robed figures were rushing toward him. A long leather whip cracked like a pistol shot.

The weight of the lash on Parks' face sent him reeling. He stumbled and fell as the lash stung him again. Angry voices babbled in a strange language.

Hands seized him, jerked him erect. Ruthlessly, they stripped off the tran-

(Concluded on page 114)

TEAMWORK FOR VICTORY

*A Message for All
Americans*

By
**JAMES M.
LANDIS**

*Director
of the
O. C. D.*



JAMES M. LANDIS



UNITED NATIONS forces are on the offensive along the warlines of the world, but we must not let down at home. Our Axis enemies are brutally cunning and resourceful. If they think our guard is down, they may choose that moment to strike us. Whether the news of the fighting is good or bad, we must carry on at home until our total enemy is totally defeated.

It is going to be hard, but not as hard for us as for our sons and brothers in the war zones. Ours is the less spectacular task of tightening our belts, salvaging everything on scrapheaps that can be used in this war, putting in long hours of volunteer work, sharing our tires and gasoline, giving our blood, mending and scrimping and buying war bonds. There will not be many heroes among us. Our adventure will come through teamwork.

Teamwork to make every blackout a cavern of guesswork for the enemy at the bombsight. Teamwork to gather and transport every piece of rusted scrap and every bit of decaying rubber. Teamwork to fill the membership of the car club and force out the Hitler who rides the empty seat. Teamwork to care for children while their mothers work. Your team is your local Civilian Defense Council. The workers are all of us.

If we adventure well in these fields that are open to us, and work for a just peace for all men, there will be a new and freer world of peace in which we and our children can adventure after the war.

James M. Landis
Director,
U. S. Office of Civilian Defense.

WORLD OF LIVING DEAD

By WILM CARVER

*Time Ceases for a Doomed
Man and Hurls Him into a
Land Where He Exists Alone!*

EDWIN LEAL stared unbelievably at his friend and neighbor, Doctor James Parfer. His hand clutched his midriff as if he would tear that dull, but ever-present, ache from his body, and cast it away from him.

"No, Doc," he groaned tragically. "It can't be that. Me dead in three months? Perhaps you're mistaken. Can't you make another examination—"

"I'm sorry, Ed." The doctor's voice was full of compassion. "If you had only told me sooner I could have helped you. I can do nothing now. An operation would mean certain death."

"But what will I do?" Leal mumbled dully. "What will become of Lydia, my wife? I haven't any insurance. We've only been married a year. I was planning to take out ten thousand dollars' worth of insurance next month when I get a raise. Now —" his voice broke off despairingly.

The doctor stared at him with infinite pity on his seamed, kind face. It was Sunday and they were in Parfer's home, next door to Leal's little cottage. Suddenly the doctor's eyes grew thoughtful.

"Ed," Parfer asked gently, "how would you like to *earn* ten thousand dollars, for less than a second's work?"



Dr. Parfer stared with tense anxiety at Leal's arm

Leal raised his white face.

"Ten thousand dollars?" he repeated incredulously. "You're joking."

Parfer shook his head. "No, I'm perfectly serious. Come with me; I want to show you something."

Wonder mingling with the despair that racked his heart, Leal followed the doctor out of the study, across the hall, and into a large room that had been fitted out as a laboratory.

IN a table was a cage in which a large, white Persian cat purred sleepily. Parfer took a small bottle of clear, amber fluid from a cabinet and filled a glass syringe.

"Take the cat out of the cage," he directed the wondering Leal. "That's it, just stretch it out on the table."

Leal did so, staring curiously at the hypodermic syringe of golden fluid.

"As you know, Ed," Parfer began, laying his hand on the cat's sleek side, "my hobby is experimental chemistry. Mainly by accident, I stumbled across the formula of the fluid in this syringe. Watch."

Leal's intense blue eyes followed wonderingly as Parfer injected the syringe of amber liquid subcutaneously into the cat's side. He had often come over to watch the doctor perform some experiment or other, but never before had he seen anything like this.

The cat was becoming transparent. Now, it was a shimmering, nebulous haze. Abruptly, it vanished.

Parfer removed his hand from the table. He glanced quizzically into Leal's astounded eyes.

"This fluid," he explained, "has the power to increase the vibratory rate of the molecules that, in the final analysis, comprise the bodies of all living things. The cat's body is now vibrating at such an enormously increased rate that normal eyesight cannot register an impression of it. For instance, an inadequate, but simple example of the principle is this." He picked up a tuning fork from the table, struck it with his finger. The fork vibrated, became a luminous, hardly seen blur in the air.

Leal stared about the room in dumfounded fascination. The amazing

thing he had witnessed had diverted his mind from the terrible verdict that the doctor had given him such a short time ago.

"The cat," he gasped weakly. "Can it see us?"

Parfer nodded. "Yes, but not in the way you mean. You see, the animal's rate of—living, one might say, has multiplied an inestimable number of times. Billions? Trillions? Who can say? Anyway, we ourselves vibrate at such a slow comparative rate, as proven by the cat's disappearance, that to it we must appear to be lifeless statues. For instance, when the Persian disappeared, I was restraining it with my hand. To the cat it must have seemed as though I held it down upon the table for time uncountable."

Leal shook his dazed head. He peered about the room as if he thought he might see the cat lazily napping on the rug.

"How will you bring the cat, er, back?" he asked anxiously.

"I have an antidote," Parfer replied, taking a small cardboard box from a cabinet. He opened it, displayed two grayish pellets. "This is all of the formula I have made up. The chemicals it contains are rare, hard to get. However, these pills are enough for my purpose."

THE doctor opened a tin of evaporated milk, poured some in a bowl, and dropped in one of the gray pellets. It dissolved instantly, tinting the milk a dirty gray.

"For the cat," he explained, setting the bowl on the floor.

Leal stared spellbound as the milk vanished. Almost instantly, the cat materialized into view, stood licking its chops, unconcernedly.

"It has only been a few minutes, hasn't it, Ed?" the doctor mused aloud. "But to the cat, it must have been eons before the bowl reached the floor."

"I can't understand," Leal said bewilderedly. "It was only a minute or two, as you say."

Parfer nodded. "Yes, to us. It only seemed that it was an eternity to the animal. Time, after all, can only be judged by things around us. Now if

everything stood still, as it did to the cat, then time itself would be at a standstill. The subject taking that fluid would be the only moving thing in the universe. Each minute would be a millennium, and each hour an eternity."

Leal sank to his knees, fondled the cat's soft fur.

"If only it could speak, tell us of its sensations," he said, thoughtfully.

"Unfortunately, it cannot," Parfer said slowly. "But—You could."

Leal turned a puzzled face up at the doctor. Then, comprehension flashed into his eyes.

"You mean—you want me to take the injection?" he asked. "Why?"

Parfer paced the floor, excitedly.

"Haven't you grasped the potentialities of that chemical, Ed?" he demanded. "Think of the possibilities it contains. Think what it would mean to the men in our armed forces—to officers of the law if they could take that stuff and become invisible. Not only would they be invisible, they would be supermen. They could move through a world in which every other living thing was paralyzed.

"Imagine what it would mean to my profession. In emergency operations, for example, when a second means the difference between success and failure. A surgeon under the influence of this fluid could take a hundred years to operate, and to the patient it would be an infinitesimal fraction of a second."

"I see," Leal whispered, fascinated by the doctor's words. "But why do you want me to take it? Wasn't the experiment on the cat enough?"

"No. A cat's bloodstream is entirely different from a human's. The injection doesn't seem to have harmed it, but who knows what effect the fluid might have on people? It might be fatal."

Leal rose slowly to his feet.

"I see," he said. "Because I am as good as dead now, you want me to—to test the chemical. If it is a success, I live three months longer. If it isn't a success—it doesn't much matter."

Doctor Parfer nodded gravely.

"You've put it rather bluntly, Ed," he murmured huskily. "But that's it.

And I will pay you the sum of ten thousand dollars. Of course, if it is necessary, I will pay it to your wife."

LEAL walked to the window. Across the intervening lawn mottled with afternoon sunshine, he could see, through the window of his own cottage, his wife, Lydia, sitting in the little living-room reading the Sunday paper. She looked tired; there were lines of weariness about her eyes and her face was pale and strained.

Why wouldn't it be, Leal asked himself bitterly. On his meager salary as a clerk, he had never been able to give her the things that would make life easier for her. She had none of the glittering kitchen appliances that all women love. She had no car for Sunday afternoon drives out to the country. No—her food, a place to sleep, and days of cooking, washing and housecleaning was all that he had given her.

And now, he thought dumbly, after a few short months, he could not even give her that. He would be dead, would leave her penniless, unless . . .

He turned to the waiting doctor.

"All right, Doc," he said. "Let's get on with it."

Quietly, Doctor Parfer prepared the injection.

"Now, Ed," he said, "when I give you this stuff, I want you to take a record of every sensation you have. Physically and mentally. You will walk downtown, observe the people on the streets, the cars, everything. Try to estimate the extent to which your time is speeded up. Here, take this notebook and pencil, write down everything you feel, think, or do."

Parfer took the pillbox, containing the remaining antidote pellet, and handed it to Leal.

"You'd better keep this on your person. Above all, don't lose it. I'm afraid you'd have a long wait if I had to make more."

The pillbox was a trifle large for the pocket of Leal's cheap shirt. He wrapped the pellet securely in his handkerchief and tucked it into his pocket. Then he bared his arm for the injection. The needle went in painlessly.

"Good luck, son," Parfer muttered kindly, and pushed the plunger.

Tensely the two men watched the swelling bulge beneath Leal's skin go down, as the capillaries absorbed the golden fluid and doled it out into his bloodstream.

Leal felt nothing. He looked up at the doctor.

"Don't believe it took, Doc," he began, then cut himself off with a start. Doctor Parfer stood there, staring down at Leal's arm. On his face was an expression of tense anxiety. His hand held the hypodermic syringe, tightly. The man had turned into a frozen statue. Motionless, unmoving, he stood there, as if he had done so for all time in the past and would continue to do so for all time to come. The golden fluid in Leal had worked with incredible rapidity.

Leal tore his eyes away. Doctor Parfer's rigid, corpse-like figure was horrible in its resemblance to a lifeless model in a wax museum. Leal shuddered, backed from the room and went out of the house. He gulped deep breaths of the balmy, summer air as if he had just come from the presence of the dead.

HE WALKED slowly through a world of utter stillness. No sound disturbed the deaden quiet about him. He did not hear the buzz of insects, the twittering of birds, the shouts of children or any of the thousand and one sounds that should have been droning into his ears. Silence, frightening in its intensity, crashed down upon him.

With averted head he passed his own house. He had no desire to glimpse his wife as he knew she would appear to him now, an unbreathing, unmoving, unliving horror.

At the corner, he could see a bus down about in the middle of the block. The driver's hands gripped the wheel tightly. His face wore the taut look of those responsible for the safety of many people. The left front wheel of the bus was a fraction of an inch off the ground, having just run over a bump. About the whole vehicle was a suggestion of lumbering speed—but it did not move.

Nothing moved. The realization burned into Leal's brain with brutal, clawing fingers. The sun did not move. Except when he breathed it in, the air did not move. Nothing moved in the world but him.

Across the street a woman was watering the flowers in her yard. The breeze had billowed her blue cotton dress out to one side of her, baring slim legs to the sun. Her hand held the hose lightly. The crystal water, making a long, diffusing curve from the nozzle to the ground, was an immobile stream of glittering ice, despite the warm sunshine that bathed the scene in its golden glow.

Stumbling on down the street, Leal passed many waxen statues, some walking, some riding in their cars, some idling. But all unmoving. He found himself thinking of a fairy story his mother had read to him as a child about a beautiful princess who pricked her finger with a magic needle and fell into eternal sleep, along with everyone else in her palace in the midst of what they were doing.

These people were like that, he thought. No matter what they had been doing when Parfer had pricked his arm and injected that magic fluid, they were still doing now. Thus would they continue to do until he relieved them from their paralysis by swallowing the magic pellet.

He shook himself angrily. He was being silly. In reality, he knew, the period of time that had passed since he left the doctor's laboratory was so slight that no normal mind in the world could comprehend or grasp it. But to him time was a rushing, fleeting thing. It had been long minutes since he had started on his journey through this world of living dead.

He left the tree-shaded street and took a short-cut through a park that would bring him out a couple of blocks from the business district. In the center of the park was a small cement pool. About four feet deep in its deepest part, it was used by the children of the neighborhood for swimming and wading.

A GIRL stood on the bank, staring down into the water. One hand

hovered in midair as if she had been raising it to her mouth when paralysis had overtaken her. Something about the frozen expression on the face of that frozen statue made Leal stop.

Curiously, he stared into her unseeing eyes. They were wide, unnaturally wide. There was as much white at top and bottom of the irises as there was at the sides. Her mouth was slightly open, her lips writhed back from parted teeth. It was a screaming face that he gazed into, a silent, masklike, screaming face.

Leal's breath hissed through his teeth. She was screaming. To the deaden world about him, this slender, golden haired girl was a living, vibrating, terrified being.

"What is it?" he gasped, forgetting that to her he was nothing. His eyes strained into the greenish water of the pool, toward which she seemed to be staring. He dropped to his knees. On the mossy bottom of the pool he saw the body of a child. The tot's face was contorted with strangulation, its chubby hands were claws that groped futilely up toward the sunshine.

Leal forgot that it could only have been a fraction of a second since the child had fallen into the water, that it would only be another fraction of a second before its mother recovered from the horror that gripped her, and plunged into the shallow water to the tot's rescue. To him, minutes had passed.

Every instinct in him shouted in stentorian voices:

The child's drowning! Get it out! Save it!

Without hesitating he jumped into the water. He held his breath, ducked and seized the cold, rigid body in his arms. He straightened, heaved the tot over the concrete rim to the ground, and pulled himself from the pool.

The child lay supine on the grass, still in the contorted position in which it had been when Leal grabbed it in his arms. It was a little boy, about three years old. He looked like a man-ikin, molded from pink-tinted clay.

The mother still stood staring into the pool. She had not moved. Her agonized face still screamed in silent horror. Her hand still faltered to the

mouth that it did not reach. Leal stood with water streaming down his face and body, forming a glistening pool at his feet.

The thought that he was the only living thing in his world seized him with icy dread. He felt as he would if he were to wake up on a marble slab in a morgue, surrounded by many, yet alone.

SHAKING the water from his eyes he hurried on. Presently he was threading his way through the thick throngs of dead in the shopping district. He sat down on the curb, took out his notebook and with great care not to tear the wet soggy paper, wrote an account of his actions so far. He stood up with a sigh. An overpowering desire to get back to Parfer's laboratory and take the antidote that would end his aloneness stabbed through him like a physical hurt. He ran his hand across his eyes. Tiny drops of water adhered to the back of his hand, spattered to the concrete as he flicked it away.

Suddenly he froze. For an instant he was one with the frozen others about him. His eyes burned in paralyzed intensity at the little wet splotches that the drops of water had made at his feet. He gaped down at his sodden clothes. Water had collected in a shining little pool at his feet.

His stunned eyes flicked about him. The cars in the street, the Sunday afternoon strollers in positions of hurrying to and fro were still and unmoving.

But the water was imbued with life.

Even as he pulled the handkerchief in which he had wrapped the antidote from his pocket he knew what he would find. In dumb apathy he unfolded it and gaped woodenly at the nothingness within. The gray pellet had vanished. The water in the pool had dissolved it as quickly as the other had dissolved in the bowl of milk in Parfer's laboratory.

"But why—how?" Leal's haunted eyes blazed the question to the unheeding world around him.

He remembered how the bowl of milk had vanished as the invisible cat

lapped it up. Did that not prove that the molecular vibration of the cat's body had transferred to the fluid with which it came in contact? How else could the cat have swallowed it? Swallowing entails mobility of the fluids swallowed. Still, regardless of the cause, the antidote was gone.

Like a blow the full realization of what this meant struck him with all its terrible import. He was trapped in this world of living dead!

"No!" he shouted, springing to his feet. "I'll get back! I *won't* be like this. Parfer will help me. He'll make more antidote."

His voice died away. The memory of the scene in Parfer's laboratory flooded his tortured mind. Parfer had been a statue. A living, dead statue. Thus would he be now. Thus would he be a year from now. Thus would he be a hundred years from now.

NUMBLY he gazed at the unheeding world about him. Loneliness welled up in him, lay an unbearable weight, in his breast. An impelling urge sent him stumbling blindly toward his home. He was drawn there as a hurt child is drawn to its mother. He had to see Lydia. Even though she would be a ghastly travesty of a living woman, he had to see her, touch her, be near her. . . .

He entered his home. Lydia was still sitting near the window. She was reading a serial in the paper. She seemed to be fascinated by the story. A faint smile quirked the corners of her mouth. The little crinkles, that he knew so well, were about her eyes. She was the final masterpiece of the wax-modeler's art.

But to Leal she was dead. She was not living.

"Lydia!" he shouted despairingly. "Look at me, darling, please look at me."

He might as well have pleaded for a cube of ice to give him warmth.

Hopelessly he leaned forward and kissed his wife's waxen cheek. It was cold, with the horrible coldness of the unliving. And what made it more horrible, he thought dumbly, was the fact that in reality she was a warm-blooded, vital, throbbing woman.

It was *he* who was inhuman. It was he that kept the people about him in their state of death-like immobility. How many hours had passed since he had admitted that golden fluid into his body? One? Two? No, not any.

"No time has passed," he groaned aloud. "When I took the injection, Lydia was sitting there exactly as she is now. To her it has only been an incalculable fraction of a second since I entered the room. To me, it's been long, weary minutes. I could stand here for a century, and she would never flick an eyelash."

Motionless he stood a long time thinking. As long as he lived, others would be dead. But with his death, the frozen world about him would spring to life. The cars would whirl along the streets. The hustle and bustle of the city would resume. The dead would live again.

Leal gave his wife a last despairing look and turned to go back to the wading pool that would free him from his torment. He shuddered as he remembered a drowned person he had once seen—the protruding eyes, the mottled face, and bursting veins. He gritted his teeth. Death would be a matter of seconds. Life would be all eternity.

He paused at the street. The thought struck him that he could at least fulfill his obligation to Doctor Parfer. He entered Parfer's house, made his way to the laboratory. Parfer still stood there, frozen in the same posture that he had held, when Leal left him.

Leal got dry paper and pencil, sat down at the table and wrote a full account of everything that had befallen him. He explained his resolve to end his life. He asked Parfer to tell Lydia what had happened and pay her the ten thousand dollars. When he had finished he tucked the folded paper into the doctor's breast pocket, pressed the cold, corpse-like hand, and shuffled heavily out of the house.

NOT wishing to pass his own house again, because he could not bear to see the memory-haunted cottage on his errand of death, he turned the opposite way. He intended to go partly around the block and enter the street

that would take him to the pool and oblivion.

As he turned the corner, he glimpsed, further down the street, a tableau that brought an involuntary exclamation of horror to his lips.

An old woman had started to cross the intersection against the red light. Her faded old eyes had failed to discern in time a huge truck that had been lumbering toward the crossing, trying to beat the signal.

Her eyes were wide with terror and her hand reached out in futile entreaty for the truck to stop its plummeting charge. The bumper was inches from her frail body. Leal could see the horrified driver, frozen in his desperate efforts to stop before his truck crushed her life away beneath the wheels.

Leal knew that the moment he died the truck would leap forward. There would be a brief, rending wail, the hoarse shouts of the spectators and

the old woman would be a broken, mangled thing on the pavement.

Into his mind flashed the thought that as long as he remained alive, there was no life—neither was there death. He remembered the drowning child he had pulled from the wading pool. How many other tragedies were being enacted at this very moment. About the city? About the whole world?

Would it not be selfish of him to relieve his own agony by suicide? Until the malignant terror that was eating his life away had brought his life to an end, could he not make his way through an unknowing and unheeding world, preventing accidents, averting impending tragedies?

His decision reached, with a deep sigh of finality Leal started toward the old lady.

He did not hurry, for he knew that even if he took half of eternity to reach her, he would still have the other half to spare.

THE GOLDEN TEMPLE

(Concluded from page 106)

sition mechanism and most of his clothing.

In vain he screamed and fought. Again the lash knocked him down. It bit into his bare flesh as he lay trying to protect himself with futile hands. Existence became a prolonged agony of pain.

Then he was yanked erect and shoved roughly in among the harnessed slaves on the road.

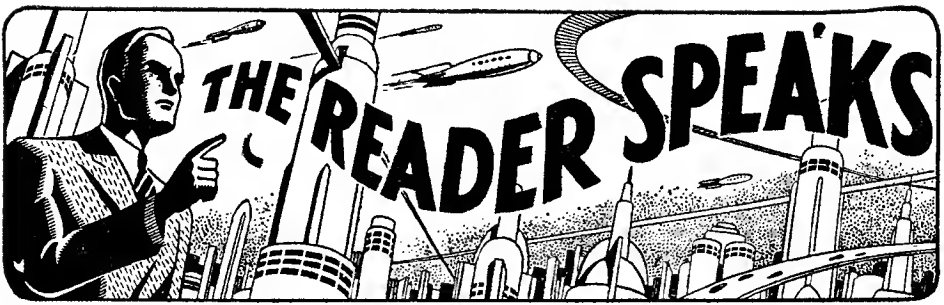
With a broad leather halter about his chest he could do what the others were doing, straining forward dragging the huge stone block in its cradle after them.

On the grey hot desert of Gizeh, that summer afternoon of 2876 B.C.,

the building of the Great Pyramid was well under way. The placid Nile nearby sparkled in the sunlight. A hundred thousand sweating slaves, lashed by the whips of a thousand overseers, for more than ten years had been toiling to erect these first few tiers. But steadily the great limestone blocks were being hauled into place. Immense task, to the glory of Khufu. Under the watchful, indomitable Cheops, the giant monument was rising.

Unceasing, toiling effort, on through the years. No one particularly noticed the pale-skinned, queer-looking slave, except that he was always clumsy and seemed to need more lashing than the others.

Coming Next Issue: EXILE TO CENTAURI, a Complete Amazing Novel by ROSS ROCKLYNNE—THE LOTOS EATERS, a Complete Novelet by BOLLING BRANHAM—TUBBY, ATOM SMASHER, a Humorous Story by RAY CUMMINGS
—and Many Others!



A Department Conducted by SERGEANT SATURN

BEFORE the old Sarge adjusts his ear plugs and puts on his dim-out goggles—in order to be able to withstand the pandemonium of the astrogation chamber—let's chat for a moment like an orderly crew before take-off time.

I have a couple of letters in this month's mail pile which do not come under the head of junior pee-lot chatter. The first is from Conrad Fisher of 229 E. Spring Street, Titusville, Pennsylvania. Conrad has just joined the Science Fiction League although he has been a reader of fantasy and scientification since 1926. He also studied the international language in 1925 and now offers to correspond with any and all SFL members who are familiar with "Ro" or who would like to learn it.

The old Sarge doesn't know about the linguistic ratings of you kiwi pilots, but he thinks that is a pretty nice offer. You space-teers who master "Ro" can then take up the interplanetary patrols with the chief astrogator, and we can have verbal fireworks in a big way.

The most interesting letter of the month comes from Oliver C. Hey of Bad Axe, Michigan. In browsing around through old books of a scrap drive, Oliver ran across a scientific volume published in 1836 which contained, along with other data, a lot of the then known facts about the planet Jupiter. Mr. Hey included an illustration which shows four phases of Jupiter as recorded by the leading scientists of that day.

Quite an interesting letter, and I'm sorry that we can't reproduce the illustration here for all you junior astrogators to see what early nineteenth century scientists saw when they looked at Jupiter through the telescopes of their day.

Okay, toss away your smokes, boys, and clamber through the airlock so we can seal 'er up.

A DARNED GOOD ISSUE

By W. S. Burgeson

Sneeze the dust off your brain, space-happy, and grab yourself a seat. We're going to blast off!

As practically everyone else does, I'd like to give my opinion of you: I would sum you up as a "fractional unit". (The fraction, of course, being one-half.)

I think you are a pretty good old duck. Even though you do waddle around the reader's department with a tank full of Xeno, casting a bleary eye at fan communiques.

However, without you, good old TWS, CF and SS wouldn't be the same.

Well, so much for the prevarication department, Sarge, let us now review the Feb. issue of TWS.

The Cover: When I figure out what those night-

mares are, and what they're eating—I'll drop you a line on the subject.

FRONTIER PLANET: Not much of a plot, but a pretty good adventure yarn.

DE WOLFE OF WALL STREET: A humorous, interesting short. Good goin', K.K.!

STAR ARROW: Eureka! Miracle of Miracles! Cummings writes a very good story. More like it, Mr. C.!

AIMLESS ASTEROID: Pee-yew! Call the "meat wagon" Inspector; it's been dead several days.

THE PIPER: Wonderful! It's different! It's entertaining and exciting. The best story in the book!

CINEROBOT, INC.: Who the heck left that laying around? Haul it away to the morgue!

Your inside illustrations are pretty good, but how about a few pics by Finlay or Seydenfrost?

Well, thanks for a darned good issue (for the most part) anyway!

The next issue looks promising, with a capital P.—Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Now see here, Private Burgeson! The customary form and style is to preface your letter with the salutation "Dear Sarge" whether you are sincere or not, before you start running through a breezy set of paces and capers. So take your seat on that tall stool in the corner and pull a stern rocket sleeve down over your ears.

Meanwhile we will hear from Kiwi Regan.

FEBRUARY ISSUE FAIR

By Thomas Regan, Jr.

Dear Sarge:

I consider the February ish fair. Two good stories, two "could be better" and two really bad. 1. FRONTIER PLANET was good but not up to M. W. Wellman's high standard.

2. AIMLESS ASTEROID was the other story that could be rated good. A swell short.

3. CINEROBOT INC. fair.

4. STAR ARROW not so hot.

5. DE WOLFE OF WALL STREET was terrible. Pete Manx is worse than "Lefty Feep" who appears in another mag.

6. THE PIPER. This story isn't worth talking about.

All the special features were good as usual.

Cover was lousy as usual.

Illustrations were poor as usual.

To tell the truth all your artists are terrible outside of Finlay, Paul, and Schomburg, and these three you use very infrequently.

What happened to that annual you were going to give us?

And while I'm at it, how about TRIMMED EDGES?—138 Townsend St., New Brunswick, New Jersey.

There is nothing stirring on the annual at the present moment, Pee-lot Regan. I'll let you know when there is anything to report. You will see more of Finlay in the forthcoming issues of all three of our science magazines. And I don't recall tossing a dish of choice bones about trimmed edges before you little carnivores. That was distinctly your own idea.

And now let us see what this next buckeyed Buckeye has to offer.

FIRST HUNK OF SCIENCE

By Marty Huebner, Jr.

At first I must inform you that T.W.S. was the first hunk of science fiction I ever bit into.

The great event occurred in either 1934 or 1935, when one of my sister's boy friends gave me a bunch of magazines to read. Among them was a mag called (if I remember correctly) SCIENCE WONDER STORIES. Its feature novel was a yarn called THE IMMORTALITY SEEKERS, another story was THE ETHER EDDY. There was a "Tubby" story entitled THE SPACE TIME MACHINE. There was also a corny strip called "Zarnak". Sarge, as a personal favor to me, will you please look up and publish the date and data of that issue?

The next T.W.S. I saw was the one with the space-bug on the cover. I didn't buy that, I read it while waiting for a bus. I became infatuated with T.W.S. and C.F. (my favorites) and S.S. I bought each succeeding issue of these magazines faithfully. That's how I became acquainted with T.W.S.

Now to get down to the latest issue. It is lying on my desk in all the garish glory of its cover. I really shouldn't pan the cover! It's the best cover I've seen on T.W.S. yet! NOT A SINGLE B.E.M.! The stories are all good. THE ETHER ROBOTS takes first place, STORM IN SPACE takes second place, TOO MANY COOKS takes third place, SCIENTIFIC SPOOKS takes fourth place, TUBBY-TIME TRAVELER takes fifth place.

MARTIAN HERITAGE and HOW MUCH TO THURSDAY are tie for sixth. Jep Powell's article on the death ray is the best I ever read. Altogether I think this is one of the best issues T.W.S. ever put out. By the way, HOW ABOUT THE T.W.S. ANNUAL? Please give us poor fans some dope. And I don't mean morphine or any allied substances either! 50c to 75c is reasonable, I think. But the cost doesn't really matter. (Ooops, I shouldn't have told YOU that!)

Just keep T.W.S. at the same high level and nobody should kick.—R.D. No. 2, Oberlin Road, Elyria, Ohio.

Kiwi Huebner, you waste a lot of time for the old Sarge. I just thumbed through our bound copies of WONDER STORIES from June, 1933, to April, 1936, and I can't find any of the stories to which you have reference. So you'll have to come closer with your dates.

Your doctor's advice is...

Plant a VICTORY GARDEN

for Good Diet, Good Health



**DO YOUR PART IN WAR
FOOD PRODUCTION**

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Imagine plotting an astrogration to Mars and being off a couple of years in your timing. Tsk! Tsk! You must do better than this.

About the annual—note what I answered to Pee-lot Regan just ahead of you. But don't worry; we're going to slip you a beaut just as soon as times and conditions get right.

Next case—er—I mean, next communicate.

NOW CENTIPEDES

By Ronald Young

Ha ha, Sarge, so some of T.W.S. readers can't even bring themselves to call you by your name, not that I blame them much but then. I just finished reading the Feb. issue. "Gulp!" what a cover! What kind of centipedes do you call 'em?

I've got a question to ask you. Why do some of the characters carry swords instead of guns puleeze? Answer that for me, will you? I'm not trying to be personal but inquisitive. Just how much Xeno do you have on hand? In the Feb. issue Bob Klappa has a good idea about why not leave Thrilling off the title. I second the motion. Guess I'll have to shut off the hot air now, the house is getting too hot.—R. R. No. 1, Hampton, Iowa.

Never mind the ha-ha stuff; you should be asking questions on the Quiz Kids program, Kiwi Young. If you can't place the roly-polies after reading Ray Cummings' story, why ask me what they are? The same goes for the gun-and-knife inquiry. How the heck do I know how much Xeno I have on hand? You space monkeys make so free with it the old Sarge never knows just where he stands. Now get back to your seat while we check the I.Q. of Freddie Kuehndorf.

ONE OF THE BEST

By Fred Kuehndorf

Dear Sarge: Your magazine, I find after a careful study I made in connection with a research paper I wrote for English, is one of the six or eight best of its kind on the market today.

This is a result of the frequent (more or less so) appearance of Kelvin Kent and his Pete Manx as well as the appearance of Ray Cummings and Nelson Bond, oh, yes, and Binder.

If you could get some stuff by Bloch, Derleth and Quinn, not to mention Dunc Farnsworth, Fritz Lieber, DeCamp, Heinlein, and Nat. Schachner and others, then, my son, you would have a mag a true SF fan would pay real money for.

To heck with the annual. My suggestion is that you have the authors I mentioned. You'd start running circles around all other mags both in quality and circulation.

Oh, yes! Try getting such people as Bok, Paul, Magarian, and McCauley on your art staff and be ready to enjoy real popularity.

Only one fault can I find and that's a very minor one. It is that the M.C. of the correspondence department, one Sgt. Saturn, you may have heard of him, is a block-headed, Xeno-happy jerk. Imagine, he gets a letter from a guy in the U. S. Naval Air Station and refers to him as "soldier". Bet he (the sarge) thinks Nimitz is in the Army and that Gen. H. H. Arnold is in charge of submarines.—321 Dryden Rd., Ithaca, New York.

Avast there, kiwi! I don't know what you're running up on the old Sarge, and I haven't time to delve back through earlier issues to find out, but if the old space dog called a sailor a soldier, or a marine or an aviator the same, it was a sort of affectionate term of general nomenclature.

The title "soldier" has come, by usage, to mean a stalwart and trusted assistant. Okay, sailor, climb back into your bunk and get space sick.

MAGICAL HORMONES

By Charles Walsh

Dear Sarge: After reading your interesting article on hormones in the February issue of your maga-

zine, **THRILLING WONDER STORIES**, I had an idea that may help me a great deal.

You see, I have been searching high and low for a method of increasing my height and I would appreciate it very much if you would send me additional information on your articles. I would like to know if there is a reliable product already on the market or whether I would have to take treatments from a doctor.

If your reply proves satisfactory I will immediately take out a five-year subscription to T.W.S. If the method itself proves successful I will then take out a ten-year subscription after the five-year one expires.

You have my written promise and I hope I will hear from you soon.—664 Eagle Avenue, New York, New York.

Why do all you space birds try in your insidious fashion to lay the blame for everything at the old Sarge's doorstep? What with keeping this astrogation department in line, Saturn hasn't time to be responsible for everything else you kiwis notice in TWS. No foolin', there are a lot of men in the crew of this ship, and gals, too, that you junior peels haven't dreamed of. And as for checking up on everything an author says—well, it's plumb impossible.

However, speaking about hormones, I suggest that you write to the research department of such pharmaceutical houses as E. R. Squibb & Sons of New York or Eli Lilly & Company of Indianapolis, Indiana, or Wm. S. Merrell & Company of Cincinnati, Ohio, for information on the subject.

REAR ATTACK

By Sgt. Jerry A. Mace

Good Xeno to you, Sir. And before I undertake the disembowelment of the Feb. TWS let's have a drink all 'round and forget that nasty old letter labeled, "Fanning the Fans." I'm safe enough anyway now that I'm back in my tank. You apes in the control room just blank your jets and tighten your acceleration belts and I'll get the old crate started.

Dauber Bergery is not responsible for those many—

[Turn page]

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eyed monsters on the cover, but his interpretation of same is off the beam. Just take a gander at those knobby knees—three to each M.E.M. Hollywood would never approve.

By the way, Sarge, there seems to be an excess of agitation for a rear cover. Some of these Gahoos would pay fifteen cents to enter the Louvre and then have the nerve to squawk for a Petty girl. Anyway, there is a rumor rampant that Bergey is slowly going mad over the horrible monstrosities he is forced to reproduce, so let's conserve his sanity and be content with one shock per issue.

The article was timely and interesting as was its predecessor and snags first place over the yarns in my book.

The stories were all inferior with the possible exception of AIMLESS ASTEROID which was pretty fair considering the fact that there is one character involved whose name sets my teeth to grinding. As for the rest, there is little wonder the mag is bi-monthly. However the line-up for the next issue holds promise of better things to come so I'm hanging on to fifteen cents.

STAR ARROW was the usual pirate tripe and could hardly be classified as science fiction. But then I suppose the authors can hardly be blamed for this sort of thing. If the dear feeble-minded fans crave plenty of old-fashioned rough and tumble with a few far-fetched gadgets thrown in for atmosphere, why, that's what we'll have and perhaps I'd better go back to "Tom Swift" or "Tarzan" to form a proper appreciation of their simple beauty. Or, as they say in LaBelle Frawnce, Phooey, and make mine Xeno.

As for Pete Manx, my perennial favorite, let me ask the question of which you will probably hear much more: Why didn't our hero have some memory of meeting his future self in the guise of De Wolfe and act accordingly? Come now, Kent, we know you are capable of better things.

In THE READER SPEAKS we have the usual assortment of space-happy Recruits who, like a lot of other poor fish, don't recognize a barb when they see one and so have no appreciation of the words spilled hither and yon by "The Old Space Dog." Well, you can't have lemonade without lemons which is one reason I stick to Xeno.

I hereby vote a pair of silver space wings to Kiwi Seville (Ph.D.) for the best letter of the issue. He is a man of rare perception and jawbreaking vocabulary with a delicate touch on the rocket keys. And why not have some similar prize for the best letter each issue?

Well, move over, Napoleon, I'm coming back in.—Camp Young, Indio, Calif.

Say, Pee-lot Mace, are you by any chance feeding Xeno to your rocket mixture chambers? You purr along as smoothly as Captain Future's Comet. I can't kick a fellow sergeant in the rear when he writes a letter like this. In fact, all I can say is that when you start after the Japanazi with your flash and style, they are going to get high behind and suffer from a rear attack, too. A salute to you, Sergeant Mace! And a couple of chromium rivets from Lockheed to you for your letter.

Comes now a squawk from an old reader who has made a new discovery.

SACRED BULLS—ARE TARGETS

By Augustus Elliott Kinkade

Dear Sarge: A reader of TWS, SS, and—though not so enthusiastically—of CAPTAIN FUTURE, I overlooked THE READER SPEAKS (and likewise THE ETHER VIBRATES and UNDER OBSERVATION) for too long. I got great enjoyment in going over my files of the three magazines, recently, in reading the Bouquets, Brickbats, and Bon Mots of readers and of the Old Sarge.

BUT—Sarge! Why protect the Sacred Bull—Manly Wade Wellman? OR—is it the Editor who does it? And Wellman, smugly safe, asks us to say what we think of his FRONTIER PLANET in that invaluable department STORY BEHIND THE STORY, too. Shall I tell him? Well, I "dood" it—even if ye Ed does take your xeno away for printing it.

FRONTIER PLANET is a wonderful story for pimple-faced adolescents—note the 15-year-old hero (Boone Gaillard) who is joined presently by 12-year-old Agatha Harvison... Bang! Bang! Boone kills two stubby-jawed Terrestrials. And soon Boone shot two more and 10-year-old Will happily plistoed the fourth! Regular Dead-eye Dicks, aren't

they? Cowboys afoot, behind the Asteroid Belt!

Yes—and our Peolot, the Doctor of Philosophy—Robert Seville. What did he think? He's no grammar school reader. And Sgt. Jerry A. Mace? He's dry behind the ears—and yet you give him FRONTIER PLANET. But, of course, Boone suddenly aged, in a few paragraphs, to 24 years—on page 22, last of chapter two. Then, too, the tale improved.

Now, Sarge, in many SF magazines, readers criticize our old favorite, Ray Cummings, too unjustly sometimes, too, but letters criticizing Sacred Bull Wellman seldom get printed. Why, oh, why? And he should send some of his stuff to the SF department of *The Boys World*, too.

Having stuck my neck out, I'll proceed to say that I think all the departments should be retained. I am even favoring the return of "Science Questions and Answers" as a regular feature again.

I cannot get hot-'n-bothered over the covers and illustrations as do some, but I'd like lots of Finlay and Magarian. A few of the "Mac" girls might be decorative, too. They're nicely curved and upholstered, always.

Back to prevalent criticism, SF fans, about Ray Cummings: I can explain why Cummings is not so good, sometimes. He goes in for mass production, runs a regular fiction factory (look in all your SF mags, and you'll know I'm right).

Turning the crank of the Fiction machine gets tiresome for Ray C. He pauses. With one hand on his pocket-book (all the Cummings I know are Scotch) and the other hand holding his super-duper microscope, Ray peers into the whirling planets of the Atom for first-hand information as to microcosmic cataclysms. Meanwhile, 16-year-old daughter Betty looks over the unfinished tale in the fiction machine, is horrified to find no sweetie-pie heroine, and starts the factory going to get a nicely rounded one into the story... When Ray returns, he looks things over as he takes the crank of the machine, then he deftly puts a bra and space shorts on Betty's heroine—and takes up the weary grind to the Grand Fadeout. Another world saved by two weary young people; but they end in each other's arms!

Kelvin Kent's "Pete Manx" stories are good.

Why not have more psychometric-angle stories? Do not some of the Senior astrogators know psychology and psychiatry?—1542 California Avenue (rear), Fresno, Calif.

So, you discover the reader departments belatedly, Kiwi Kinkade, and you try to make up for lost time in a hurry, eh? Putting the long pants on Wellman and Cummings at the same time, eh? All right, you asked for it. I'm turning you over to the tender mercies of your fellow junior astrogators. Let them take you apart and put you back together. (The old Sarge—and TWS—have been dissembled and assembled so many times we feel like an Erector Set in a nut house.)

I got trouble now with a junior pee-lot in the fruit department.

PLUMS TO PRUNES

By A. R. Brown

Dear Sarge: Having bought and completed the April issue of TWS today I forward these following impressions:

Cover—Bergey's improved some but a pink tank, oh, deah! Good for three plums, though.

Stories:

1. CONQUEST OF VENUS—A readable yarn, well written. Millard is coming up. Give it three plums.

2. PAWNS OF CHAOS—Bond here has slipped. Sorta expected more. Only 2 plums, 4 seeds.

3. HEAVY MAN—Give this series a long rest for 2 or 3 issues. Two plums, 3 seeds.

4. THE INVINCIBLE WRESTLER—Believe it or not this is the third time in three months I've read the same theme and explanation. Probably reason why it rates so low. Still it gets 2 plums.

5. LOTUS JUICE — Brrr-aaa-ccc-kkk! One PRUNE!

Art (?) gets 2 plums. Reasons are Marchion! on page 76 and Morey on page 108.

To sum up:—Poem

Quote: "Since days of yore

Has slipped TWS

To hit the floor

Oh, my, yes." Unquote.

My ratings have been stolen from someone, but they work this way—5 plums tops, to 1 plum. 5 seeds make a plum and 100,000 prunes make a seed. Catch?

Hints: A cover by Paul or Wesso. Art inside by Wesso, Paul, Schomburg and Leydenfrost.

More Pete Manx and the "Via" series. Could also salute return of Anton York. Member THREE ETERNALS? Stories by Williamson, Binder, Kuttner (at his best), Wellman, etc.

More scientific articles and cover lettering like the one on this issue.

Glad you toned down; you sound much better.—139-09—34th Road, Flushing, New York.

And a bunch of yesterday's carrots to you, Kiwi Brown. Anyway, you didn't put any extra sand in the spinach, so we'll pass up that crack about hitting the floor. But some nice sunny day this spring when the nurse takes you out for a stroll in the park and you feel the upsurge of spirits—write the old Sarge a nice letter, won't you?

SHORT AND TO THE POINT

By W. J. Mason

Dear Sarge: Here I am as usual to tell you my likes and dislikes about THRILLING WONDER STORIES.

The cover of the April issue was fair.

I rate the stories as follows:

1—THE CONQUEST OF VENUS.

2—PAWNS OF CHAOS.

3—THE HEAVY MAN.

4—LOTUS JUICE.

5—THE INVINCIBLE WRESTLER.

Now that I am a member of the Science Fiction League I would like to know where the nearest chapter is.—R. 1, Franklin, North Carolina.

Okay, you Science Fiction Leaguers of North Carolina, one of you drop Kiwi Mason a line and direct him to the nearest space port. Meantime, let's hear from the West Coast.

TWO ERRORS

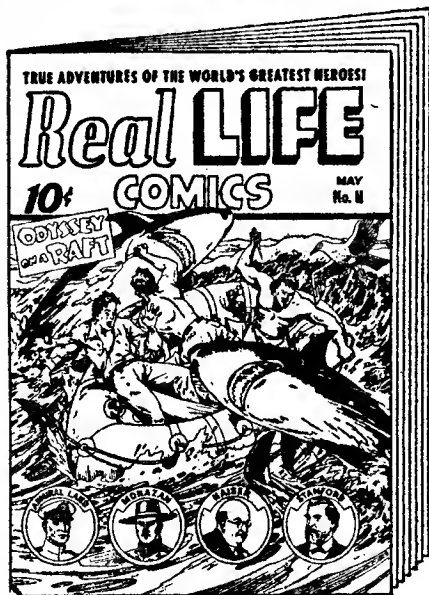
By Byron Kelham

Dear Sarge: For the benefit of any sub-moronic idiots who think otherwise, I would like to state that you are not only one of the bright spots of the mag but also quite comical most of the time.

I must admit, however, that in the February issue you seemed to be in a sort of a daze. In a card

[Turn page]

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commenting on the Oct. issue, I said that I agreed with Bond but considered him guilty of what he criticizes in others. In the commentary following my note, you disclaimed all knowledge of Bond's statements and complained of "ad libbing" and about "a great deal going on not written in the script." I don't know what script you are talking about, but if you turn to the Story Behind the Story for October, you will find Bond's statements all nicely printed out.

About those nude femmes, I meant semi-nude (see October cover for example). My error.—3723 S. E. Clinton, Portland, Oregon.

So we are both wrong, Kiwi Kelham? No kiddin', we are now so far past the February issue, that I don't remember what happened there, but I'll take your word for it and don't mention it. Just let it lay. Honest, things move so fast on our three space craft, TWS, SS, and CF, that the old Sarge might wave good-by to somebody on the Moon and get shot at as a flirt by an outraged maiden on Mars. You junior pee-lots will have to fry the eggs about as quick as the old Sarge lays them.

And thanks for the parsley garnishment. A lot of folks think I'm funny, too—but not in the way you mean.

CALLING DR. EINSTEIN!

By Walter Belsch

Dear Sarge: On page 73 of Ray Cummings' yarn he says that the fall of Kogo would have been harmless without the weights. Since acceleration of gravity (even on the moon) increases uniformly he would not have fallen any faster with the weights than without them. However the increased mass of the chains would make a greater force on the impact with the moon, the chains would fall as a separate body and would not make it any more dangerous for Kogo; as they would absorb their own shock. Get it? I tried to make it clear.

Keep Cummings out; his stories are a cross between detective stories and plain punk stories. Adopt a simpler cover than the one on the February issue of TWS. Keep your mags bi-monthly. Get a handless gorilla to illustrate for you; any change would be an improvement. The stories are mostly good, as are the authors, except R. C.—Cincinnati, Ohio.

Well, so far this voyage, Ray Cummings seems to be divided between ardent boosters and rabid dissenters. When you space harpies get through tearing him in half put the remains in that spare bunk over there and get to polishing up the brasswork. Walter, you Belshed out a broadside which I pass on to Senior Astrogator Cummings without comment of my own. In all my various adventures I never fell off a crag on the Moon with a handful of chain. But you've got me to wondering now . . . why wouldn't he bounce?

Here comes trouble from that Ebey kiwi again.

DEPARTMENTS PERKING UP

By George Ebey

Dear Xeno Sponge: Yup, it's me. And all primed for the usual mud-slinging and/or analysis. First—the February cover: is it a? Anyway 'tis poorly constructed. The gal belongs in the foreground being menaced by the B. E. M.s while our hero dashes to the rescue, raygats blazing.

Ah, tradition . . .

The tentacled monsters, the glaring red and yellor background, are a pleasant reminder of the nauseating days of *Brown*. Congratulations to dauber Bergey. His February cover should stop the yelpings of the Good-Old-Dazers for quite a while: it's a fine sample of pre '35 cover art.

Comes the usual mediocre parade of stories. "Frontier Planet" makes a comparatively new theme—sociology—seem dated. The Marchionni "illustrations" prove conclusively that Marchionni is even worse than Morey.

"Star Arrow" features the Cummings' plot No. 3, section 2B, variation A. Plus an Orban hideosity. Confidentially, Sarge, why doesn't Cum-

mings switch back to his "atom" plot? He's already used his "revolt of the robots" plot, his "winged girl" plot and his "mutiny on the spaceship" plot just recently. The "atom" plot would seem nice and fresh by contrast.

As for the shorts—Pete Manx ought to get out of his rut. Ditto for the three spaceteers. "The Piper" was passably written but just happened to leave me cold.

"Cinerobot, Inc." struck me as being the best story in the issue. The plot has been used before, but the handling was good, the twist clever.

Departments are perking up. Looking Forward begins to assume the status of an editorial page—instead of a glorified blurb section. I note in "The Reader Speaks" that some of the lads are standing up for me. Good, good, and I'll send those Finlay originals along to you fellers as soon as possible. Just like I promised.—4766 Reinhardt Drive, Oakland, Calif.

Instead of pinning your ears back with a tooled rivet or a cotter pin from the dynamo shaft, Kiwi Ebey, the old Sarge merely feels the inclination to chuckle over your letter. Honest, the old Sarge doesn't care a rocket blast about a junior astrogator's age, sex, color, past or future, but some of your fellow pee-lots are doing more than standing up for you. They are craning their necks to look you over.

By all the moons of Jupiter, I'll swear I don't even know what all this is about, but—well, read the following communique and answer it to suit yourself.

JUST HOW OLD IS ANN?

By Banks Mebane

My saturnine Sergeant:

I see that Lynn H. Benham came across the same discovery I did, and is wondering the same things about it. In a comparatively recent issue of one of your competitors, which, for the sake of anonymity, we shall call *Peculiar Fables*, there appeared a letter. This letter was from a certain George Ebey, who claimed to be the youngest reader of the aforementioned publication, being only eleven. Not only did this George Ebey praise the magazine, *Peculiar Fables*, and its companion, *Nauseating Tales*, but he said that the stories (censored) and (deleted) were excellent, and that the best author was—Ray Cummings.

Now I ask you, does this sound like the Ebey of TWS? Yet this Ebey not only has the same name, but the same address—4766 Reinhardt Drive, Oakland, California! Several possibilities seem to present themselves: (1) George Ebey is actually eleven years old. This I doubt seriously. The letter from the eleven-year-old Ebey is just what you would think, but the TWS letters? I hardly think so. (2) One Ebey is the father of the other. Could be? Like father, like son. (3) Some person or persons for an unknown reason signed his name and address to the letter. (4) George was merely playing a gentle joke on one WHACK, editor of *Peculiar Fables* and *Nauseating Tales*.

One of these should cover the situation, and I await the voice of Ebey with proverbially bated breath.

Heigh-ho and away! Now to the good ship TWS (how I wish it was merely WS). Cover not half-bad this time. In fact, not three-quarters bad. I didn't like the contrast at the top—green background, rose-colored tank, and yellow and orange letters—but the rest was good. No insipid, horrified and horrifying heroines with dumb, handsome (?) heroes rushing to the rescue. Just subdued BEMs and a hand. And not bad BEMs at that. The trend to block off type is ideal.

The fiction is not on such a high level. After a few issues' rise in TWS and SS from the current slump, this is a decided sink. "Pawns of Chaos" (what an awful title) was not what I expected from Bond. Please steer away from the hero-saves-earth-from-some-oppressing-destroying-and/or-invading-something-and-gets-girl theme that has characterized so many of your novels. Next issue looks good. Burbs for "Through the Blackboard" and "The Devil's Fiddle" look interesting. "Speak of the Devil" in last SS was good.

Millard's novelette is what might be called the formula yarn at its best. The shorts hit a rather drab average and the artwork was awful. You need Dold and more of Finlay.

The letter section is improving. Sir Saturn has finally condescended to come down from his pin-

nacle of humour joemilleresque and answer a few questions. And what with Jerry Mace, Lynn Benham, George Ebey, and a few others, it does fairly well. Why not give an original illustration to the writer of the letter which the readers vote best in each issue? This should stimulate it.

And now, Sarge, if you will please answer this question—will or will not the annual be published? And if so, when?—I will close my dictionary and quietly steal away.—P. O. Box 1139, Wilson, N. C.

Kiwi Mebane, the old Sarge is not going to take a single crack at your letter. You've got the old chief astrogator so interested in your speculation about Pee-lot Ebey, that I'm going to sit back and act the part of the "Lone Tree Post Office" and let you two space yard-birds stage a couple of rounds for the delectation of the astrogation chamber in general. How about these charges, Kiwi Ebey?

As for the annual, I have already answered that a couple of parsecs back this same voyage.

Now comes words and more words from our old space mate—Bill Stoy. He's in a quarrelsome mood, junior—probably spent too much time in the Spacemen's Café.

BERGEY AND BELARSKI ARE BETTER

By Bill Stoy

Dear Sarge:

Back again to tilt verbal lances with that arm-chair spaceman, that ringed or haloed gentleman with the soul of a loquacious old non-com and the thirst of a dehydrated sponge. Or, considering the April Reader Speaks, mebbe it would be better if we clashed verbally with swords. Oh, well, I'll dispose of you later on.

Right now I'd like to put in a quiet rave for the April TWS cover. That is a really good work of art, neatly executed in all respects. A lack of lurid and screaming colors, with a substitution of more subtle shades and tints, realistic BEMs et al. (which, because of this quality, are not offensive to the eye) . . . in short, an oil painting good enough to have been done by Finlay. Which is high praise indeed from my point of view. In fact, I almost thought it had been done by Virgil, until I noted Bergey's signature. What's got into the cover artists lately, that the two Bs (Belarski and Bergey) who used to create such consistently crummy covers,

[Turn page]

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now have turned about and are doing just the opposite? Is it inspiration, a free rein in drawing what they wish, or just the cracking of the old editorial whip that's affected them?

Interior art is hardly noticeable enough to evoke comment. But what there is of it seems to be fair enough, with the possible exception of the Marchioni and Morey, Finlay is awaited with pleasure—as Leydenroft would be, were he scheduled.

My "lukewarm" praise of the fiction in TWS shall remain just that until the stories show a measurable improvement. My praise or criticism remains in direct ratio with what I consider to be the issue's standard of fiction. And so I'll be only too glad to drool congratulations upon the authors . . . just as soon as some really top-notch yarns are presented. Hmmm?

Rather liked "The Conquest of Venus" by Millard. Good writing, but more than that, the narration of one small thread to illustrate the general tapestry of world exploitation seemed to make the entire story more effective than the usual tale of this type. First place.

"Pawns of Chaos" on the other hand, lacks that subtle differentiation from the run-of-the-mill, and so places a poor second. Bond's writing is okay, but what good is that when I've read the same type over and over again?

"Lotus Juice" grabs the third place spot, while "Heavy Man" and "The Invincible Wrestler" tie for fourth. The most that can be said of these shorts is that none are really poor; the least that none are particularly good.

Good science articles this issue. "The Story Behind The Story" is as superfluous as ever. "Looking Forward" and "The Reader Speaks" are equally necessary and good. That idea of special topical letters in LF is a good one, for nearly all fans have had ideas at one time or other about these subjects. Would dish up something myself if I had the time, but this letter takes less time and is more pleasant to write.

Whassamatter, Sarge, are ya beginning to tone down that peculiar science verbiage, that old garbishing the readers' lettuce? Just when a bunch of us fans have begun to expose your camouflaged-as-humor comments for what they are, you start to correct some minor faults by actually turning out an occasional bit of humor. Is that fair after all the trouble we've gone to? Tsk, tsk, Saturn, I'm deeply disappointed at your pussy-footing!—140-92 Burden Crescent, Jamaica, N. Y.

About this time of afternoon the old Sarge begins to have one of his dizzy spells. The old fog in the astrogation chamber thickens as the ventilation system breaks down. I quit having headaches, merely going into a profound reverie and trying to arrive at a correlated, comprehensive conclusion. Right now the score stands thus:

The covers and cover artists are okay; the ditto are terrible. The artwork is excellent; the artwork is awful. The stories and authors (all of them) are fine; the ditto are malodorous. The departments are splendid; the departments belong in Gehenna. And, finally, the old Sarge is good because he is bad; the old Sarge is bad because he is good.

What did I say about no headaches? Open a fresh pound of aspirin powder, Frog-eyes. Never mind a teaspoon. Just squirt it on. And to cap the sternmost rocket, here comes a pee-lot who wants serials!

DON'T GET ME WRONG

By Chad Oliver

Dear Sarge: I really didn't intend to write this missive at all; I'm pounding out so many letters to magazines that pretty soon there won't be any room for the fiction. But there are three items in the April TWS that demand—simply demand—comment from yours truly. Two items because they were exceptionally good, one because—but that comes later.

Let's start with the best, shall we, Sarge? Joe Millard's "Conquest of Venus" is one of the finest stf. tales I have ever read, bar none. And I've read thousands. Mind you, it's not the best, but it is certainly up there with the best of them. My sincere congratulations to Author Millard; he did a really fine job. TWS will be passing up an op-

portunity that comes once in eons if Millard is not allowed to continue his Saga of Venus, or whatever you want to call it. Take "Thunder to Venus" and "Conquest of Venus," read them, and . . . well, the future holds much for Author Millard. And why not some book-length chunks in SS? Sorry if I sound like I'm just plugging Millard, (I've never met, corresponded with, or seen Mr. Millard) but I can't help it—I'm enthusiastic.

Next on our hit parade comes the cover. What happened? Was Bergey inspired by that nifty tale or what? 'Tis really swell. No heroines, heroes, or unconvincing BEMs. Keep it up, Bergey!

Are you getting an inflated ego, Sarge? It's gonna go down in a minute. You see, item number three is "The Heavy Man." Oh, Lord! And I was just beginning to like Carstairs, too!

And you can stick "Lotus Juice" and "The Invincible Wrestler" in with "The Heavy Man"—three of a kind. Lest I sound insulting, I'll add that all three authors—Jameson, Long and Morrison—are far above this sort of thing. So don't can 'em; just make them come up to par.

The lead novel, "Pawns of Chaos," was good—as are all Bond's tales. I do wish, though, that Nelson S. would try for quality rather than quantity; he can do better work. Though this *was* quite good.

Illustrations were fairly decent this time—except

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for Marchioni. And even he can do fine work. I recall his old pix—oh, well. How about Paul, Finlay and Weaso?

Articles were both interesting. More, please. I also like "The Story Behind the Story." Don't shoot, fans! It is good!

Don't get me wrong, Sarge. I like TWS. Suggestion: *We want serials!*—3956 Ledgewood, Cincinnati, Ohio.

With a whole larger full of fruit and vegetables and Xeno, you, Kiwi Oliver, start hollering for serials. As if I don't have enough trouble now! I suppose you want cream with your serials, too!

Well, paint my nose red and call me Jupiter! Here's a champion for the old Sarge.

ONE OF THE BEST

By Robert D. Clark

Dear Sergeant Saturn: I have been a loyal reader of TWS and SS for many years. I have enjoyed the stories tremendously, although there have been some flops printed in my two favorite magazines. There also have been some tremendous successes.

I enjoy reading what the reader has to say about the stories in Sergeant Saturn's department. I like the Sarge's style, and as far as that loud mouth, Bertram Cohen, goes—who wrote that letter slurring Sarge's department in the Feb. issue—all I can say is that he must have the mind of a two-year-old or he wouldn't write a letter like that.

Just because he doesn't like your department, that is no reason to think that others don't. In fact, Sarge, just between you and me and several thousand other readers like myself, it is one of the best departments of its type in America. So keep up the good work.—4112 Camero Ave., Hollywood, Calif.

Gang, this is precious. It is almost as good as the possible passage-at-arms between Kiwi Ebey and Pee-lot Mebane. But the old Sarge can't let this go on. Before I thank you, Kiwi Clark, for your staunch defense of your chief astrogator, I gotta break down and advise you that Pee-lot Cohen really beat you to the punch. Here—read his communique.

A FLASH WITH A FLUSH

By Bertram Cohen

Dear Sarge: After going over the April issue of T.W.S., I finally came to **THE READER SPEAKS**. After reading Katherine McInroy's letter I lifted my head and felt my face turn red. I had no intention of provoking such anger in Miss McInroy. Nor had I any wish to say something which is contrary to our national ideals. I feel I must apologize to you and Miss McInroy and I'll get into line like a good fan. You see, when I look back the stories always look better. I guess I've been reading T.W.S. so long I couldn't quit no matter how much I tried.

Say, there's something I've been meaning to write about for the last few years. What happened to IF by Jack Binder? Can't we have it or something like it back? In **CAPTAIN FUTURE** there are some points in one story that contradict something said in other issues. But let's forget about it. I, too, don't like these "needle-nosed hair splitters." I'd like to find out what happened to the Eando Binder team. That Anton York was swell. One of my most prized issues contains **DAWN TO DUSK**. (I was never able to get the first installment, though). A lot of my old favorites have gone to the boys in the service. They will get as much enjoyment out of them as I had, I trust.

Coming to the present issue, I start analyzing it. First, the cover. Bergey's cover is swell for the reason he made the Venusians plausible. My hat off to Bergey for not making them into B.E.M.s. Bond's **PAWN OF CHAOS** was good, but it ended leaving me expecting more. The next to get my going over is **CONQUEST BY VENUS**, by Joseph J. Millard. The plot was the same old boy-on-

NEXT ISSUE'S NOVEL

EXILE TO CENTAURI

By ROSS ROCKLYNNE

strange-planet-meets-girl, boy-rescues-girl, boy-wins-girl plot. It had a new twist that made it good.

LOTUS JUICE was fair. It held my interest until the end, but I feel Jameson is capable of better than this and I feel we should get better stuff from him. For a character who rose to fame with such excellent stories, John Carstairs' latest is a disappointment. The HEAVY MAN is not all I was led to expect it to be. Frank Belknap Long's next John Carstairs' will be much better I hope. The less said by me about William Morrison's THE INVINCIBLE WRESTLER the better.

The article, FORTY BILLION WINKS, presented some new ideas on sleep. I would like to hear more from Roy Kingsley on similar subjects. Charles Stoddard's ATLANTIS, HERE WE COME was the usual stuff about plane vs. battleship. The magazine on the whole is fair but with room for improvement, eh, Sarge?

Here is something else I've been meaning to do for about five years. I'm joining the League. You will find my application and name strip inside.

In case you haven't read Phil Stone's OTHER WORLDS, you should. It's even got Pete Manx in it. It's the sweetest collection of SF I ever read. I guess I'll be signing off, and don't take those things I've said in my other letter to heart, for I've truly repented.—2787 West 56th Street, Brooklyn, New York.

What the heck can the old Sarge do with a kiwi like this? Shucks, Pee-lot Cohen, you didn't even raise the old space dog's hackles. And you certainly have the right to kick about anything you want to in this department as long as it pertains to our magazine and isn't malicious or libelous.

And that is just about all from the astro-gation chamber this voyage. Everything is just about hunky-dory. Our course is plotted, all you junior astrologers show amazing promise, and the old Sarge has plenty of aspirin and Xeno for the round trip. There's but one disappointment. Shucks! No letters from gal pee-lots.

Maybe I'll have better luck next time, hmmm?

Now, climb back into your pretty cages, you space apes, and amuse yourselves by tearing this June issue of TWS to shreds.

—SERGEANT SATURN.

P.S.: I'm sorry I couldn't include all the letters again this time. Write to me, anyway. I read 'em all.

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THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY

ONCE in a while through the welter of fantastic adventure and space stories a whimsical tale that seems "down to Earth" by comparison will make its appearance. But when you read it, it has the kick of a mule. Such a story was **THROUGH THE BLACKBOARD** the moment we saw it. Immediately we asked the author, Joel Townsley Rogers,



about it. In response to our "How come?" this is what he wrote us:

Some stories take a long time growing. **THROUGH THE BLACKBOARD** was one of these. Early in the century, when I was somewhat younger than I am now, I used to read of an infant prodigy who had graduated from Harvard at 14, and was lecturing the Graduate School faculty on the 4th Dimension. He was the son of a famous psychologist, who had pushed his mind up to such enormous heights.

In due time I went to Harvard myself, then into the flying service in the last war, and then started off in the silly business of being a free-lance fiction writer, which I have been at mostly ever since. In all these years I have heard only once of the infant prodigy; and that was a story that when he grew up he quit all his prodigying, and got a job where he needed only to do simple mechanical work, and never have to think again.

But it seemed pleasant to imagine him as attaining some final success in line with his youthful promise, and so there was little professor Noel Gouf, who became in the end the great mathematical genius he had started out to be.

There is a 4th Dimension, of course, and it is all around us. And someday we shall enter into it, and Time will have no more meaning for us, or perhaps power over us. Meanwhile, Professor Gouf has wandered into it through the medium of the blackboard somewhat as innocently as Alice wandered through the looking glass, and I hope you enjoy his excursion as thoroughly as I did.

—Joel Townsley Rogers.

THE DEVIL'S FIDDLE

To switch from delightful whimsy to eerie fantasy is really but a matter of moods. In actuality it is only a short step. Such a story is **THE DEVIL'S FIDDLE**. However, it is more than a Medieval-style fantasy of enchantment. The sheer beauty of the yarn, we think, is the background of fine musical knowledge upon which the pattern of this story is woven for you. And why wouldn't this be so? The author of **THE DEVIL'S**

FIDDLE, N. R. de Mexico, is a famous Mexican musician.

Here is what he wrote us about his novelet in this issue:

I was living in Bolivia at the time—about two years ago—drinking in the gorgeous and terrible sunset every night over Lake Titicaca, when I got the idea for "The Devil's Fiddle." It happened that I needed a secretary to help me with some technical articles I was doing on native narcotic drugs, and, scouting around the tourist hotels, I was directed to an Italian refugee, a girl who could type and take shorthand, and who needed the work.

It seems she had gotten out of Trieste just in time when the War came, and she was living by the Lake of Blood getting over what she had seen and endured. She had one of those husky Mediterranean voices, and every evening, after an afternoon of dictation, we would sit looking across the lake toward Peru, watching the magnificent sunset, and she would tell me about the musical life in Trieste and Paris and Budapest.

She had been a violinist of some note on the Continent, a protégée of Hubermann, and I was ready to believe her when she told me one afternoon that she knew it for a fact that an imitation had been substituted for the famous Paganini violin when the Italian government removed it from the City of Genoa to a place of safety at the outbreak of the War.

That remark was the germ of the whole story. What if it were true, I wondered? Would there be a new Paganini? And if that much could be true, what if all the rest were true . . . the legend of Paganini's diabolical powers and of the demonic possession of his Guarnerius, upon which he was never in all his life heard to practice? I've looked it up since, in the writings of an English cleric who made a profound study of the great virtuoso's life, and who was rather inclined to underrate the "supernatural" aspects of his career.

In "My Musical Life" he reports that a Briton of his close acquaintance had once followed Paganini for eight months on a concert tour in an effort to learn the secret of his incredible talent. Finally, by bribing the Maestro's valet, he succeeded in obtaining a keyhole view of Paganini at what served as his daily practice.

"He drew the Levron Guarnerius from its case with a violent motion," we are told; "tuned and retuned it interminably until finally he seemed satisfied. Then he set his fingers on the strings and drew the bow across them without producing any sound. This was continued for the space of nearly an hour, while the Italian's fingers played silently through many a hazardously difficult composition, though all the while he kept his eyes averted from the instrument, and showed a decided distaste for even touching it."

Paganini's music, too, has its own legends, all concerned with the bad end to which most attempts to play it finally came. His great First Concerto carries an especial load of legendary accretions. Two things are true, however, historically true.

On the night of its premiere, the great conductor who had come to Rome especially to lead the orchestra fell ill and died within a space of three hours, and Paganini accordingly arranged to have the orchestra cue from the bow. During the performance everything went splendidly, except for one trifling detail—during the fiery finale, the central chandelier tore loose from its moorings in the roof of the hall, and made an interesting hash of a large part of the audience.

At the Concerto's second performance—in Torino—the concert hall burned down. It was that night, with the stench of his audience's roasting flesh fermenting his nostrils, that Paganini gambled away his violin. The only way he could get rid of it?

I asked my secretary about the violin again. Was she sure it had been stolen, or had she just been romancing? We were sitting on one of the desolate Inca ruins by the lake, but she looked around very carefully before confiding in me that she had herself

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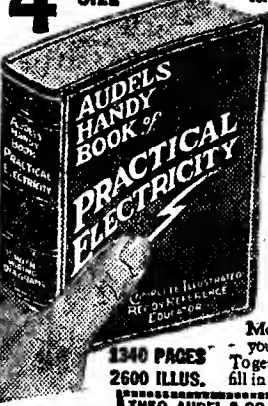
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seen the fabulous Guarnerius, in the house of one Sr. dn. Miguel M6ntez y Romero in Buenos Aires, just a week before the excellent don Miguel's peculiar disappearance, several months before.

Many people have come to sudden and unexplained ends in South America of late, and I was not certain that this detail proved her story, but who knows? As a matter of fact, my secretary disappeared, too—about the time of Stefan Zweig's "suicide," and the inexplicable demise of many other European cultural and liberal figures who had taken refuge in South America.

The circumstances made the idea stick in my mind, and even if they hadn't, I would have been interested. I've always been fascinated by the idea of the life-principle being infused into ordinarily inanimate objects by some supra-human agency. And consider, too, the recurrent idea in folk-lore of utter tenacity to that life once it has been achieved.

The broom in the story of the sorcerer's apprentice. The salt-machine in the fairy-tale—industriously grinding out salt at the bottom of the sea to make the water salty. Bells that toll upon some dire occasion with no human hand dragging at the ropes. Linotype machines that one day begin setting up their own compositions.

From the oblique point of view there is the tenacity-theme: The murdered man's heart that will not be still, and beats so loudly that the murderer is caught.

The tale of Pleyel's piano upon which Berlioz played the same piece once too often, and then the piano began anticipating his fingers, and finally refused to play any other piece and had to be chopped up, whereupon the keys ran up the wall . . . still playing.

The man who couldn't be executed; nor hung, nor shot, nor asphyxiated, nor burned, nor even dissolved by chemicals; and who was finally put through a meat-grinder, only to have the resultant hamburger keep bouncing up and down!

I kept thinking along these avenues all the way home, and when the plane that was taking me back North landed in M6xico City, I had the story all planned in my mind. I wrote it finally in New Orleans.

—N. R. de M6xico.

THE BOTANICAL DETECTIVE

Senor de Mexico's letter is almost as thrilling and chilling as the story itself. To set our feet firmly back in the pathway of scientific trend and to cheer us up so we won't have to whistle in the dark, let us follow the thoughts of Frank Belknap Long as he stalked the idea for his botanical detective to wrestle with in **WOBBLIES IN THE MOON**.

I have never been able to shake off a disturbing sensation of having stood beneath the Lunar Apennines and descended into Tycho on a swinging cable. Indeed, the lunar landscape has always seemed very real to me, and closer geographically than Europe. I am climbing out on a limb in owning up to this, perhaps, for Webster uncharitably defines "moonstruck" as "wandering in the wits, a condition supposed to be due to the moon's influence."

I have always thought that definition a trifle unfair, however. The moon is white, distant and altogether lovely, and it is difficult to associate the dark vagaries of a mind unhinged with the towering sanity of a lunar landscape, resplendent beneath brittle stars.

But the ancients were hardly fools, and the belief that the moon has a darker side may have some foundation in fact. Feeling that John Carstairs needed a vacation and a new and startling problem in crime detection to keep him from grouching in his office at the Interplanetary Botanical Gardens, I decided to find out. I let the story tell itself, after placing him in a huge, gloomy mansion overlooking the Lunar Apennines—surrounded by weekend guests with minds as tortuous and dark as night. I even went out into the foothills of that mighty mountain range and brought back—but I'd rather not talk about that.

I'm not responsible for the flora of Luna, least of all walking, manlike plants calculated to daunt even a writer of science fiction stories. But strange plants and the more unregenerate human types, cooped up in a dark lunar mansion at midnight, seemed just about the best gift I could present to Carstairs—and to you.

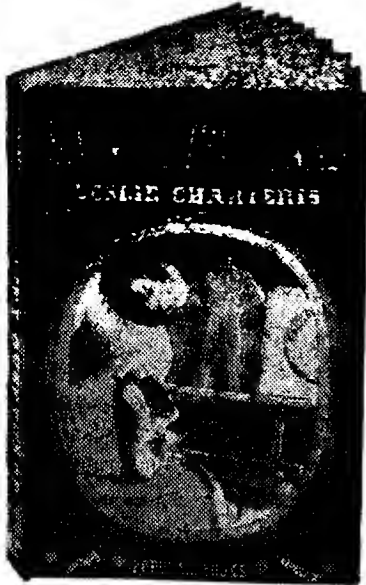
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—Frank Belknap Long.

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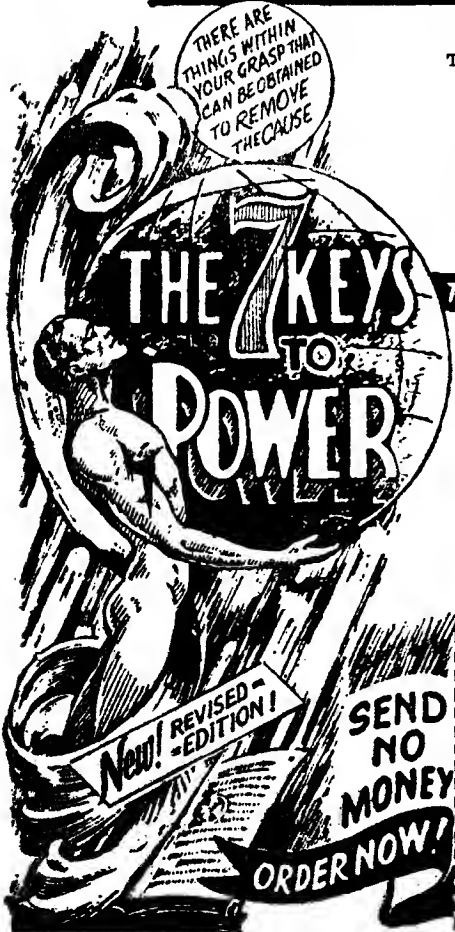
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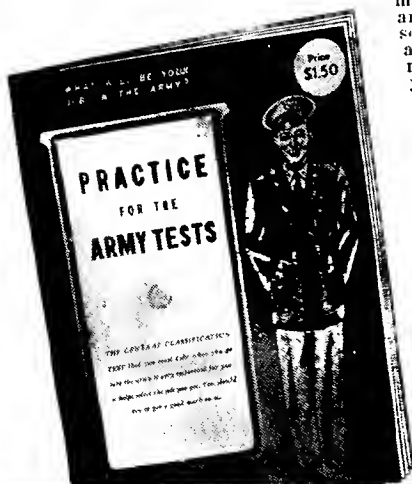
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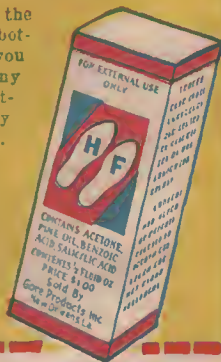
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